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ISLAM AND DEMOCRACY: REFLECTING THE ROLE OF
ISLAM IN MALAYSIA AND INDONESIA

by

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March 2002

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The question of the relationship between the teachings of Islam and the principles of democracy is, undoubtedly, one of the most pressing issues facing the Muslim world today. The principles of elected rulers, consultative bodies, accountability, tolerance, and the rule of law are not alien or new to Islam. The purpose of this thesis is to seek the elements of compatibility of Islamic principles and practice under democratic governance. This comparison is then mirrored and reflected against the governments of Malaysia and Indonesia by seeking the influence of Islam and the role it plays in the formulation of policies by the government today and in the future to fulfill the call of democratization.

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ISLAM AND DEMOCRACY: REFLECTING THE ROLE OF ISLAM IN MALAYSIA AND INDONESIA

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ABSTRACT

The question of the relationship between the teachings of Islam and the principles of democracy is, undoubtedly, one of the most pressing issues facing the Muslim world today. The principles of elected rulers, consultative bodies, accountability, tolerance, and the rule of law are not alien or new to Islam. The purpose of this thesis is to seek the elements of compatibility of Islamic principles and practice under democratic governance. This comparison is then mirrored and reflected against the governments of Malaysia and Indonesia by seeking the influence of Islam and the role it plays in the formulation of policies by the government today and in the future to fulfill the call of democratization.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Islamic resurgence and democratization are two of the most important developments of the final decades of the twentieth century. Within these two developments the question of the relationship between the teachings of Islam and the principles of democracy is, undoubtedly, one of the most pressing issues facing the Muslim world today. There is a misconception that Islam and democracy are somehow incompatible institutions. On the other hand, there are a growing number of Muslims that have called for a pluralist democracy or at least for some of its basic elements. Basing upon the Qur'an, there are ample interpretations that had been fully developed by those who wish to promote the ideals of democracy and human rights in the Muslim world.

Contrary to some revolutionary opposition, Islamic movements in Malaysia and Indonesia, in the form of political parties or civil organizations have been and continue to be active and participate within the framework of the government institutions. In Malaysia, the main opposition political party is Islamic based and its objective is to make the country an Islamic state. Whereas, Nahdalatul Ulama and Muhammadiyah, an apolitical Muslim civil organizations plays an influential role in the political systems of Indonesia.

In these two Muslim nations, the leaders and elites embarked on an Islamization process in late 1970s and resulted in a more devout Muslims among the population. Even though there are a small number of fanatics and extremist Muslims, the majority moderate Muslims of both nations prevailed that adheres to democratic principles based upon the interpretations of the Qur'an. It is these interpretations that the government of both nations is leaning upon in their governance of the country and paving the way towards developed, modern and industrialized Muslim nations.

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I.   INTRODUCTION

A.   BACKGROUND: AN INTRODUCTION TO ISLAM

Islam is an Arabic word that connotes submission, surrender, and obedience. As a religion, Islam stands for complete submission and obedience to Allah and is thus called "ISLAM".[1] The word Islam does not convey any such relationship for it does not belong to any particular person, people or country. It is neither the product of any human mind nor is it confined to any particular community. It is a universal religion and its objective is to create and cultivate in man the quality and attitude of Islam. Islam is an attributive title and whoever possesses this attribute, may he belong to any race, community, country or clan, is a Muslim. According to the Qur'an, the Holy Book of the Muslims, among every group and all ages, there have been good and righteous people who possessed this attribute and all of them were and are Muslims.

Every world religion has been named either after the name of its founder or after the community and nation in which that religion originated. For instance, Christianity is named for the prophet Jesus Christ, Buddhism for its founder Gautama Buddha; Zoroastrianism for its founder Zoroaster; and Judaism, the religion of the Jews, for the name of the tribe Judah of the country of Judea where it originated. It is the same in the case of other religions but not so with Islam. This religion enjoys the unique distinction of having no such association with any particular person or peoples.

All Muslims in the world believe in the Almighty Allah, the sole source and sustenance of life; Who alone is worthy of worship and praised; He is lord of the beginning of time at the act of creation, to the end of time, on the Day of Judgment. All Muslims believe in the Prophet Muhammad as the last messenger and the seal of the prophets. Meanwhile, the Qur'an is the complete book of God, which is guarded and preserved by Allah. In the pursuit of the path towards salvation, the Qur'an commands the performance of certain acts that have become the emblem of the faith and the expressions of a communal identity. Central to the religious culture of Islam is the

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[1] Abul A'la Maududi, "The Meaning of Islam," in *The Muslim World League Journal*, Issue No. 7. October 2001.

shari'ah or the divine law as preserved in the Qur'an. Second to the Qur'an is the *Sunnah* or *hadith*, the term applied to specific reports of the Prophet Muhammad's words and deeds. From the two fundamental sources of scripture and the Prophet's deeds and sayings (*sunnah*), the *'ulama* or *ahl al-'ilm* (people of knowledge) derive the law (*fiqh*) first by establishing rules and procedures which developed as the science of jurisprudence or the "roots of the law" (*usul al-fiqh*). These interpretations resulted in the various schools of thought and laws both for the Sunnis and the Shi'a branches of Islam.

B.   ISLAMIC POLITICAL THOUGHT

The notion of consensus (*ijma'*) could be applied to the anonymous agreement on points of law among scholars of a particular locale or of a given generation. The scholarly consensus for each of the four Sunni legal schools[2] (*madhahib, s. madhhab*) was to be able to interpret "Prophetic Traditions" in the manner most appropriate to its own needs. Whatever the differences in its method of understanding the divine will, ultimately, has been described in modern studies as the "classical theory" of Islamic law and comprised the following four roots or principles: the Qur'an (the instrumental input and authorized publication), the *sunnah* of the Prophet as contained in recognized Traditions (the environmental input), the method of reasoning by analogy (*qiyas*), and the consensus (*ijma'*) of scholars of the community. The law finally embraced two broad sets of relationships between Allah and humankind (*ibadat*), and the second, the normative relationship between one human being and another (*mu'amalat*).[3]

In Islam, there are a number of very important concepts and events that shaped the contemporary visions of what a just society should be. Subsequently, specific

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[2] Together these four schools comprise the Sunni understanding of the *shari'ah*. The earliest was Abu Hanifah (d.150/767), after whom the *Hanafi madhhab* is named. A noted exponent of analogy (*qiyas*), Abu Hanifah founded the Hanifah's school of law. The younger Medinan contemporary of Abu Hanifah, Abu 'Abdallah Malik b. Anas, who died in his eighties in 179/795 founded the Maliki school of law. Malik had a profound devotion to the Traditions (*Hadith*) of the Prophet. The next jurist of the quartet was, among his contemporaries, the most influential of them all. Abu 'Absallah Muhammad b. Idris al-Shafii, a descendant of the Prophet's tribe Quraysh, died in 204/820, and the Shafii school of law derived from his name. In general, he refined and systematized the legal thinking of his predecessors, including Abu Hanifa and Malik, seeking to reduce the range of differences in the theoretical approach to the law. The last legal school is the Hanbali School of law, identified with the greatest traditionalist scholar of his time. Ahmad b. Hanbal was born in Baghdad and died there in 241/855. Ibn Khalikan claims that he knew a million *hadiths* by heart and his major surviving work is a collection of Traditions numbering around 30,000.

[3] David Waines, "An Introduction to Islam," Cambridge University Press, New York, 1995, pp. 65-69.

experiences and historical development of the Islamic community (*ummah*) have indicated that Muslims did not always agree with their rulers and thus there are many concepts and teachings that apply to many different contexts for opposition.[4] Despite the great dynamism and diversity among contemporary Muslims in terms of expressing their political views, it demonstrates the foundations for the Islamic perceptions of democracy.

Abu al-Ala Mawdudi, a significant Sunni Muslim thinker, who established the major South Asian Islamic revivalist organization, the Jamaat-I-Islami, stated that the, political system of Islam has been based in three principles: *Tawheed* (Oneness of God), *Risalat* (Prophet hood) and *Khilafat* (Caliphate). Other Muslim scholars might express the issues in a different format, for example according to Sheikh Taha[5]

> Islam is not too concerned about building a state. Islam, from the beginning, was working to build an *ummah* and there is a big difference between building an *ummah* and building a state. Building an *ummah* means you have certain concepts and values. The Muslim *ummah* is based on three main values: *Tawheed* (oneness of God), *Tazkiy'ah* (purification of the human being), and *Imr'an* (building a civilization with values). These three values are considered as the main goals of Islam (*maqasid al-sharia*) producing a strong *ummah*. Whereas, a nation is built around a piece of land, and not values.

From the Qur'an verses, (3:159), "and consult with them on the matter," Qur'an (43:38), "those who conduct their affairs by counsel," Qur'an (42:38) "consultation, (*shura*)," and Qur'an (22:41, 3:104,110), "Enjoining what is good and forbidding what is wrong is the responsibility of the state as well as the people in general," are just a few samples from the Holy scriptures that are interpreted to accommodate political thoughts towards the democratization of a Muslim society. Accordingly, the "constitution of Medina" in Islamic history, outlines the rights and procedures for conflict resolution and community action among Muslims, both from Mecca and from Medina, and non-

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[4] John L. Esposito and John O. Voll, " Islam and Democracy", Oxford University Press, New York, 1996, p. 40.

[5] Sheikh Taha Jabir Alalwani was born and raised in Iraq. He graduated from Al-Azhar University in Cairo in 1959 and obtained his doctorate in 1972. He taught Islamic Jurisprudence for 11 years in Saudi Arabia and help to established, the "International Institute of Islamic Thought (IIIT)," together with the late Dr. Ismail al-Faruqi and Dr. Abdulhameed abu-Sulayman in America and is now teaching at the Graduate School of Islamic and Social Sciences (GSISS) in Leesburg, Virginia. He is also the President of GSISS and the Chairman of the *Fiqh* (Jurisprudence) Council of North America. (Source: *Muslim Democrat*, "Interview with Sheikh Taha," Published by the Center for the Study of Islam & Democracy (CSID), Washington D.C., Volume 4, No.1, January 2002).

Muslims. Modern Muslims agree that this document and the experience in Medina provide the precedents for a pluralistic sociopolitical system in accord with Islamic traditions and revelation.[6]

C.   GOVERNING PLURALISTIC MUSLIM NATIONS

In the Southeast Asian region, in the middle of the 19th century, Holland and Britain established their empires in Indonesia and Malaya. The Muslim peoples of this region were not yet part of a unified culture or empire, and as Robert Hefner writes

> Few areas of the non-Western world illustrate the legacy and challenge of cultural pluralism in a manner more striking than the Southeast Asian countries of Malaysia, Singapore, and Indonesia. Thus, the colonial predecessors to these societies, known as British Malaya and the Dutch East Indies, were regarded as the locus classieus for the newly minted concept of "plural society".[7]

Within this circumstances, secular nationalist, communist, Islamic traditionalist, and reformist Islamic movements were pitted against Dutch and British rule, and against each other, in the struggle to define Malay- Indonesian societies in the 20th century.[8]

There is a perception and fear that democratic change, in Malaysia, Indonesia and elsewhere, along with the concern about the rise of Islamic militancy, also results in a rise in inter-communal tensions, and inter-religious violence.[9] However, other developments in Asian countries with majority Muslim populations suggest a strikingly different view of the role of Islam in political and social change. For example, in Indonesia and Malaysia, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), mass-based organizations, women's rights advocacy groups, and even leading government figures now work to promote democratic values, human rights, a free and critical press, religious tolerance, and gender equality from an Islamic perspective.[10]

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[6] Ibid. Esposito and Voll, p. 40.

[7] Robert W. Hefner, "The Politics of Multiculturalism, Pluralism and Citizenship in Malaysia, Singapore and Indonesia," University of Hawaii Press, Honolulu, 2001, pp. 4-5.

[8] Ira M. Lapidus, "A History of Islamic Societies," Cambridge University Press, New York, 1988, p. 749.

[9] Douglas E. Ramage, "Introduction: Democratic Transitions and The Role of Islam in Asia," Asian Perspectives Series, The Asia Foundation, October 18, 2000, Washington DC. p. 1.

[10] Ibid.

D.   PURPOSE AND IMPORTANCE

From the Islamic political thought and governing a pluralistic Muslim nations mentioned above and Islamic political resurgence, the purpose of this thesis is to seek the elements of compatibility of Islamic principles and practice under democratic governance. This comparison is then mirrored against the governments of Malaysia and Indonesia by seeking the influence of Islam on the government today and in the future.

Islamic movements were formed to challenge some regimes and support others. In some areas, Islamist movements are part of the government or are themselves the ruling force in the political system. Esposito lists them as: (1) revolutionary opposition to the existing political system, (2) legal or co-operating opposition operating within the existing political system, (3) active participation in government in alliance or coalition with other political forces, and (4) the controlling force in the existing political system.[11]

From the above groupings, this thesis will be outlined in the following manner. After this introduction, Chapter II will discuss the philosophy of Islam and the concept of democracy. Some elements of compatibility found in Islamic interpretation will be highlighted. The Islamic movements in Malaysia, which maintain the status of legal opposition and participate within a multiparty parliamentary system, will be discussed based on these interpretations in Chapter III. Likewise, these interpretations will also be discussed in Chapter IV concerning movements that are non-political but actively participate in the government in alliance with other political forces. Conclusions follow in Chapter V.

These issues are important because the question of the relationship between the teachings of Islam and the principles of democracy is, undoubtedly, one of the most pressing issues facing the Muslim world today. There is a misconception that Islam and democracy are somehow incompatible institutions. This misconception fails to recognize that there are nearly 800 million Muslims living in societies with various degrees of democratization. The principles of elected rulers, consultative bodies, accountability, tolerance, and the rule of law are not alien or new to Islam. However, for the past 600 years, these principles were abandoned and authoritarian rulers governed some of the

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[11] Ibid Esposito and Voll, p. 33.

Islamic nations. These rulers tried to derive their legitimacy from Islam, and thus corrupted its image and forced its views on the government.

The major questions and arguments put forward that need to be answered are:

- Do many Muslims today accept the fact that Islam and democracy are compatible?

- What exactly is democracy?

- How are they compatible?

- How would it work in an Islamic context?

- Which form of democracy is preferable?

- These fundamental questions and many others need to be addressed and how this compatibility works in the government of Malaysia and Indonesia in the past, present and future.

II.   ISLAM AND DEMOCRACY

A.   INTRODUCTION

Islamic resurgence and "the third wave" of democratization are two of the most important developments of the final decades of the 20th century. The values of these two phenomena on civilization are always perceived to clash within the context of western liberalism. The debate concerning Islam and democracy is by no means new. Since the 1980s, this debate has been infused with some fresh thinking and considerable grass roots movement. A growing number of Muslims, including a good many Islamic activists, have called for a pluralist democracy, or at least for some of its basic elements, such as the rule of law, protection of human rights, political participation, government control and accountability.[12]

There are different interpretations of Islam just as there are different interpretations of Christianity and Judaism. It is these interpretations that must be fully developed and put forward by those who wish to promote the ideals of democracy and human rights in the Muslim world. There is a widely shared assumption that basically states that democracy entails secularism, and secularism in the Muslim world has become anti-religious. If Muslims are forced to choose between democrats who are against Islam and Islamists who are against democracy, then it will always be a "clash of civilization". Democracy will then be adopted in the Muslim world only if it is explained and developed from within the Islamic framework.

Considerable interest is being showed and debates are taking place now where democracy and Islam are subjects of great controversy, and particularly, in Arab and Muslim nations. There is an apparent dilemma in Islam as well. On the one hand God states that, "those who denounce Allah's wishes and decrees are the Unbelievers". On the other hand, Allah or his Prophet do not tell us how we are supposed to rule according to His decrees or who is suppose to have the authority as to what those decrees really mean.[13]

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[12] Gudrun Kramer, "Islamist Notions of Democracy," in Joel Beinin and Joe Stork, eds., *Political Islam*, University of California Press, Berkeley and Los Angeles, California, 1997, p. 71.

[13] Dr. Radwan Masmoudi, "Islam and Democracy: Between the Past, Present and the Future," Talk

In this chapter, the author would like to state his opinion that the principles of Islam are compatible with democracy but are dependant on how these principles are interpreted (*ijtihad*), and how these interpretations are adopted in the governing styles of Muslim nations. There was an assumption, on the contrary, that is shared not only by some Islamists who rejects democracy, but also by different proponents of democracy, both liberals and others alike, who want to take Islam out of politics. There are also those Muslims who believe that democracy has no place in Islam, while many believe that a nation cannot be Islamic without being democratic. In extracting the elements of compatibilities of democracy vis-à-vis Islam, it is only logical to understand superficially the historical aspect and what Islam means in a Muslim society.

1.   Brief Historical Roots of Islam

The word Islam means, "the willing and active recognition of and submission to the command of the One, Allah," and Prophet Muhammad is His Messenger (*al-rasul*), and a guide for his people and all humankind.[14] People who practice this faith are Muslims. The prophetic mission of Prophet Muhammad was not simply the continuation of the Jewish and Christian religious traditions, but the culmination of all previous revelations from Allah. God sent Muhammad as the final Messenger, "the last seal of the prophets" (Qur'an 33:40), and gave him the Qur'an, the revelation of God's will, in its final and complete form.

The Qur'an and the Prophet provide the fundamental sources for the Straight Path (*Shari'ah* or Islamic law) of Muslim life. Born in 570, but orphaned at a young age, Prophet Muhammad belonged to the Hashemite clan of the Quraysh tribe. In 622, Prophet Muhammad migrated (*hijrah*) to Yathrib, later renamed Medina (City of the Prophet) and under his guidance, Islam in Medina crystallized as both a faith and a sociopolitical system.[15] From 622-632, the Muslim community expanded and established its hegemony over Central Arabia. The old tribal system of loyalties and values was

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delivered at Algiers, during the International Conference on Islam and Democracy organized by the High Council of Algeria, on March 20-22, 2000.

[14] David Waines, "An Introduction to Islam," Cambridge University Press, United Kingdom, 1995, pp. 2-3.

[15] John L. Esposito, "Islam and Politics," Third Edition, Syracuse University Press, 1994, pp. 5-6.

reformed and Islamized.[16] The era is described in Islamic tradition as the "age of ignorance" (*al-jahiliyyah*).[17] The term occurs in the Qur'an, not as a past period of time, but rather as a dynamic psychological state of mind being challenged by the new moral force of the message of Prophet Muhammad. This led Prophet Muhammad to be cautioned and advised:

> Never will the Jews be pleased with you, nor yet the Christians, unless you follow their own creeds. Say: "Behold the guidance of Allah is the only true guidance." (Qur'an 2:120).[18]

The death of Prophet Muhammad in 632 plunged the community into two successive political crises involving political authority, the issue of succession and the problem of political fragmentation. One fraction, the Sunnis (Arabic word for custom or use), felt that the Caliphate (*Khalifah*, Arabic word for successor) should be chosen, as Arab's customarily were, by election. Therefore, they supported the succession of the first four or "Rightly Guided Caliphs (RGC), Abu Bakr, 'Uthman, 'Umar and 'Ali, who had been Prophet Muhammad's companions. The other groups thought that Muhammad should chose his cousin, son-in-law and the 4th caliph, Ali as his immediate heirs, and that succession should be through his bloodline. In 680, one of Ali's sons, Hussein, living in Medina led a rebellion against the ruling Umayyad caliph, Yazid. Hussein refused to recognize Yazid's legitimacy as caliph. However, Hussein did not receive the expected popular support and during the battle of Karbala, Hussein and his small army were surrounded and defeated by the Umayyad army. Hussein's martyrdom began the Shi'a, or sometimes called shi'ite, movement, whose name comes from a word meaning "partisan of Ali".[19]

From the modest origins in Mecca, Saudi Arabia in the 7th century, the universal community of Muslims today comprises around one billion believers living in almost 55 countries worldwide. Muslims form a majority of the population in more than 40

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16 Ibid. p. 7.

17 Ibid. David Waines, p. 27.

18 Ibid.

19 Philip H. Stoddard, David C. Cuthell and Margaret W. Sullivan, " Change and the Muslim World", Syracuse University Press, 1981. p. 6.

countries and are the second largest community numerically after Christianity.[20] The Shi'a and the Sunnis are the two major branches of Muslims, with the Sunnis comprising about 90% of the total. Cutting across these sects is Sufism, which is a mystical strain of Islam that reflects the need, felt by many Muslims, to realize in their personal experience, the living presence of God. The differences between these two major sects are not so much in belief, which are fundamentally the same for both, but rather in practice, interpretation and political theory.

In the Sunni tradition, the conventional genealogy of modern Islamic thought begins with Sayyid Jamal al-Din al- Afghani (1839-97). His political career included activity in Egypt, Iran and the Ottoman capital of Istanbul. Muhammad 'Abduh (1849-1905) was a young associate of Sayyid Jamal al-Din in Egypt during the 1870s and 1880s. They spoke against the foreign economic and political domination of Egypt that culminated in the British invasion and occupation in 1882. After being exiled in Paris, he returned to Egypt and eventually became Chief Mufti (Jurisconsult) of Egypt.[21]

Abduh occupied himself with reforming the teaching of Arabic and understanding of Islam, arguing that a proper understanding and implementation of the moral and ethical principles of Islam were compatible with the adoption of modern science and technology.

Rashid Rida (1865-1935), who came to Egypt from Tripoli, Lebanon, was Muhammad 'Abduh's most influential student. Rida promoted the Salafiyya Movement, a neotraditionalist orientation that restricted what was to be regarded as "correct" in Islam to the Qur'an and the *hadith* or reports about the words and deeds of Prophet Muhammad during the period of Prophet Muhammad's life and the reign of the first four RGC.

The Salafiyya Movement influenced many *ulama* (Muslim Scholars) in the Sunni Arab world. Among them is Hasan al-Banna (1906-49), an Egyptian schoolteacher who established the Society of Muslim Brothers (*Jam'iyyat al-Ikhwan al-Muslimin*) in 1928. It is the largest and most influential Islamic organization in the Sunni Arab world. An offshoot of this is Sayyid Qutb, one of the leaders of the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood

[20] Ibid, David Waines, p. 1.

[21] Joel Beinin and Joe Stork, "Political Islam," University of California Press, Berkeley and Los Angeles, California, 1997, p. 5.

executed in 1966, whose writings and political thoughts inspired many radical Islamist movements of the 1970s. His "Milestone" stipulates that Islam stands for change and it seeks this change in the individual and society. This change covers every aspect of human life, from personal morality to business, economics and politics.[22]

2.   The Political Framework of Islam

Islam claims it transcends the narrow meaning of religion and encompasses every aspect of human life making it a complete guiding system for human society. Furthermore, it also claims to be the final version of the monotheistic tradition of religions, and as such with Islam, the divine intervention comes to an end forever. From the Qur'an come the terms, *shura* (advisory council), *hizb* (party), *Tawhid* (Oneness), *Mustadaf* (oppressed), *ummah* (community of believers), and *Jahiliyya* (ignorance), which are interpreted in a modern political context (democracy, political parties, a classless society and so on).[23] Claiming to be the true and final religion, Islamic philosophy of governance is based on the three principles of *Tawhid* (Onemess of Allah), *Risala* (Prophethood) and *Khilifa* (Caliphate).[24]

Tawhid means that one Allah alone is the Creator, Sustainer and Master of the universe and all that exists in it. This principle of the Oneness in Allah makes meaningless the concept of the legal and political sovereignty of human beings. No individual, family, class or race can set himself or herself above Allah. Allah alone is the ruler and His commandments constitute the law of Islam.

Risala is the medium through which the law of Allah is received. Two things from this source have been received: the Qur'an, the book in which Allah has expounded His law, and the authoritative interpretation and exemplification of that Book by the Prophet, through word and deed, in his capacity as the representative of Allah. The Qur'an laid down the broad principles on which human life should be based and the

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[22] Sayyid Qutb, "Milestone," Publish by the Mother Mosque Foundation, Cedar Rapids, Iowa 52406 and printed in the United States.

[23] Olivier Roy translated by Carol Volk, "The Failure of Political Islam," Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1994. p. 39.

[24] These principles are extracted from the speech by the late Syed Abul A'la Mawdudi.

Prophet of Allah, in accordance with these principles, established a model system of Islamic life. The combination of these two is called the *Shari'ah* (law).

Khilifa means "representation". Man, according to Islam, is the representative of Allah on earth, His vice-regent. By virtue of the powers delegated to him by Allah, within the limits prescribed, he is required to exercise Divine authority.

To illustrate this meaning, consider the case of an estate in your name in which someone else has been appointed to administer on your behalf. Four conditions invariably are realized. First, the real ownership of the estate remains vested in you and not the person administering the estate. Second, he administers your property directly in accordance with your instructions. Third, he exercises his authority within the limits prescribe by you, and fourth, in the administration of the trust, he executes your will and fulfils your intentions and not his own. Any representation that does not fulfill these four conditions will be an abuse of authority and breaking the covenant, which was implied in the concept of "representation". This is what Islam means when it affirms that man is the representative (*Khalifa*) of Allah on earth. The state that is established in accordance with this political theory will, in fact, be a caliphate under that sovereignty of Allah, which could be interpreted in modern terminology to signify a leader.

3.   Democracy in Islam

The first incident of "democratic" political method in Islamic history was shown by the Prophet at Jirana on the track leading back to Mecca after withdrawing from Taif with the captured families and the flocks of Hawazin.[25] Consensus (*ijma*) and consultation (*shura*) with the various heads of the tribe were attributed to the release of the Hawazin families. This democratic principle was utilized after the death of Prophet Muhammad in 632 when Abu Bakr, the first RGC, was elected to be the Prophet's successor or *Khalifah*.[26]

Political philosophy, be it in Islam or democracy, revolves around, "power and authority" and claiming the legitimate right to rule, manage and oversee peoples'

[25] Sir John Glubb, "The Life and Times of Muhammad," Published by Madison Books Lanham, Maryland, 1998, p. 326.

[26] Ibid. p. 367.

affairs.[27] However, in Islamic terms, sovereignty is with God and man is the vicegerent and an agent on earth. After the Prophet Muhammad, this so called agent can be called Caliphate, Prime Minister, Head of State or President depending upon the style of governance. Whatever he may be called; his governing will be bonded by *Shari'ah* law. Sayyid Qutb expounded upon this and says that, "By the *Shari'ah* of God is meant everything legislated by God for ordering man's life; it includes the principles of belief, principles of administration and justice, principles of morality and human relationships, and principles of knowledge."[28]

Legitimacy of political authority is endorsed by the rights of individuals who endorsed the representatives to oversee their interests, and sociopolitical and economic well-being. As Weber describes it, "Politics for us means striving to share power or striving to influence the distribution of power, either among states or among groups within a state."[29] Therefore, citizens are the owners of the state and the collective representation, which is called the government. This is the philosophy of the modern political theory of constitution and liberal democracy.

By the end of the 20th century, the subjective definition of democracy by scholars evolved and was interpreted as various universal standards. Democracy now is thought of, as a citizen's inherent political right to participate in the governing system irrespective of their ethnicity, social status or gender. Liberal democracy is now accepted as the most popular and universal system of government, or "as the only game in town".

4. Theories of Democracy

Democracy does not connote a single or a univocal term. It has been used to describe a form of governing system that has generated intellectual debates dating back to ancient Greece but which became a theme of "political influence" in most Western industrialized countries. This successful style of governing is a system with a healthy

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[27] Md. Moniruzamman, "Islam and Democracy: The Underlying Philosophy," A paper presented during the 2nd Annual Conference of the Center for the Study & Democracy (CSID) on, *Islam, Democracy and the Secularist State in the Post-Modern Era* held at Georgetown University, Washington D.C. on Saturday April 7 2001. p. 91.

[28] Ibid. Sayyid Qutb, p. 107.

[29] H.H. Gerth and C. Wright Mills, "From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology," Oxford University Press, Inc, New York, 1946, p. 78.

political culture where power is originated from the ordinary citizens to whom the governing agencies are responsible. Due to the interdependent nature of the world today, developing countries have become not only a test ground of such influence, but also have been obliged and pressured to conform to the western political system in order to be recognized as legitimate in international society. After the demise of socialist alternatives, liberal democracy has appeared to be the most accepted form of government.[30]

The traditional and simplest expression of democracy as a system of "government by the people, of the people, for the people" might satisfy a statesman like Abraham Lincoln but not the sophisticated scholars and experts which differs on defining the concept. Political scientists have proposed more complicated and sophisticated theories. Diamond (1999) listed democratic norms in the following terms:

> Democracy is instrumental to freedom in three ways: First, free and fair elections inherently require certain political rights of expression, organization, and opposition. Second, democracy maximizes the opportunities for self-determination, and Third, it facilitates moral autonomy, the ability of each individual citizen to make normative choices and thus to be self-governing.[31]

Lijphart meanwhile put forward two models of how democracy can be organized and run. The first model, "government by and for the people" is via the "the majority of the people" which is the essence of the majoritarian model of democracy and the alternative model of government, "as many people as possible," which is the crux of the consensus model.[32] He elaborated and explained the various patterns of democratic rule in 36 countries by classifying them into two dimensions or namely, "executive-parties dimension," and "federal-unitary dimension."[33] Lijhart also supported the eight criteria of defining and measuring democracy proposed by Robert A. Dahl in his "Polyarchy" (1971, 3): (1) the right to vote, (2) the right to be elected, (3) the right of political leaders

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[30] Ibid. Md. Moniruzzaman, p. 92.

[31] Larry Diamond, "Developing Democracy: Toward Consolidation," The John Hopkins University Press, Baltimore, Maryland, 1999, p. 3.

[32] Arend Lijphart, "Patterns of Democracy: Government Forms and Performance in Thirty-Six Countries," Yale University Press, New Haven, 1999, pp. 1-8.

[33] Ibid.

to compete for support and votes, (4) elections that are free and fair, (5) freedom of association, (6) freedom of expression, (7) alternative sources of information, and (8) institutions for making public policies depend on votes and other expressions of preference.[34]

Meanwhile Linz and Stepan believed that consolidated democracies need to have five interacting arenas in place to reinforce one another in order for such consolidation to exist or be crafted for a democracy to be consolidated: First, the conditions must exist for the development of a free and lively civil society. Second, there must be a relatively autonomous and valued political society. Third, there must be a rule of law to ensure legal guarantees for the freedoms of citizens and an independent association life. Fourth, there must be a state bureaucracy that is usable by the new democratic government. Fifth, there must be an institutionalized economic society.[35]

Nevertheless, it can be argued that it is the liberal democracy in various guises and to varying degrees that dominates discussions of democracy today. It is a form that has its roots in those countries which are the main advocates and inheritors of liberal tradition: Western Europe, the United States, Australia, New Zealand, Canada and the nonwestern nations of Japan and South Korea. Also, it is this form of democracy that the United States has listed, "to promote democracy and human rights abroad," as one of the three core objectives. This was initiated by President Reagan and followed by President Clinton, and resulted in pursuing a forward-looking National Security Strategy for the new century by deriving these objectives from the report submitted in accordance with section 603 of the Goldwater-Nichols Defense Department Reorganization Act of 1986.[36]

However, such liberal democracy, having its root in western civilization, could not avoid severe criticism and resistance from some other civilizations, especially Islam. Hundreds of years after the original development and consolidation of democracy around the world, Muslims nations, therefore, still are examining the compatibility and

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[34] Ibid. pp. 48-49.

[35] Juan J. Linz and Alfred Stepan, " Problems of Democratic Transition and Consolidation," The John Hopkins University Press, Baltimore, Maryland, 1996, pp. 7-15.

[36] President Bill Clinton, "A National Security Strategy for the New Century," Produced by the White House, December 1999, p. 25.

incompatibility between Islam and democracy, and this is demonstrated by the degree of resistance Islamic societies have created.

5.   The Theory and Practice of Democracy in Islam

The above explanation of the term *khilafa* also makes it clear that no individual or dynasty or class can be *Khalifa*. The authority of *Khilafa* is bestowed on the whole of any community, which is ready to fulfill the conditions of representation after subscribing to the principles of *Tawhid* and *Risala*. Such a society carries the responsibility of the *Khilafa* as a whole and each one of its individuals share in it.

This is the point where democracy begins in Islam. Every individual in an Islamic society enjoys the rights and powers of the caliphate of Allah and in this respect all individuals are equal. No one may deprive anyone else of his/her rights and powers. The agency of running the affairs of the state will be formed by agreement with these individuals, and the authority of the state will only be an extension of the powers of the individuals delegated to it. Their opinion will be decisive in the formation of the government, which will be run with their advice and in accordance with their wishes. Whoever gains their confidence will undertake the duties and obligations of the caliphate on their behalf, and when he loses this confidence, he will have to step down. In this respect, the political system of Islam demands and is subjected to accountability and responsibility.

What distinguishes Islamic democracy from Western democracy, therefore, is that the latter is based on the concept of popular sovereignty, while Islam rests on the principle of a popular *Khilafa*. In Western democracy, the people are sovereign, while in Islam, sovereignty is vested in Allah and the people are His caliphs or representatives. In Western democracy, the people make their own rules and laws. In Islam, the *Shari'ah* laws given by Allah through His Prophet must be followed. In one system, the government undertakes to fulfill the will of the people, while in the other; the government and the people have to fulfill the will of Allah.

In trying to form the government, the basic Islamic principles in the government are, first, the source from which the ruler draws his/her authority which is the public will.

The ruler cannot claim divine right to rule the people nor can he force himself on the people. Secondly, the ruler has to rule through participation and consultation (*shura*) with the people or those whom the people elect as their representatives. In the past, the representatives were the leaders of the tribe (*ahl al-hal wal aqd*). Today, they clearly must be elected. Third, authority must be used to secure justice for all, without any discrimination. All citizens must have their rights protected, and especially the weakest in the society. Oppression (*dhulm*) is strongly forbidden.[37]

The Islamic approach to human rights is those rights granted by Allah. Rights granted by Kings or legislature assemblies can be withdrawn as easily as they are conferred; but no individual or institution has the authority to withdraw the rights conferred by Allah.[38] The charter and the proclamations and the resolutions of the United Nations cannot be compared with the rights sanctioned by Allah. The former are not obligatory on anybody, while the latter are an integral part of Islamic faith. All Muslims and all administrators who claim to be Muslim have to accept, recognize and enforce them. The verdict of the Holy Qur'an is unequivocal: "Those who do not judge by what Allah has sent down are the disbelievers (*Kafirun*)." (5:44)

The following verse also proclaims: "They are the wrong-doers (*zalimoon*)". (5:45) "They are the perverse and the law-breakers (*fasiqoon*)." (5:47).

In other words, if temporal authorities regard their own words and decisions as right and those given by Allah as wrong, they are disbelievers. If, on the other hand, they regard Allah's commands as right but deliberately reject them in favor of their own decisions, then they are wrongdoers. Law-breakers are those who disregard the bond of allegiance.

All these Islamic principles can be practically implemented through democracy. Such democratic principles and ideals as human and civil rights, representation, free and fair elections and separation of powers are examples of how democracy can be implemented using Islamic principles in government and fulfill the goals of *Shari'ah*. The argument about sovereignty, whether it belongs to God or the people, is merely

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[37] Dr. Fathi Osman, "Democracy as a Contemporary Implementation of Islam," Conference Report, Published by CSID, Washington D.C. Volume 3, No. 1, April 2001, p. 8.

[38] Ibid. Speech by Mawdudi.

theoretical since God has created men and women as His vicegerents (*khalifa*) on earth as explained by Sayyid Qutb.

6.   Islam and The State

There is a general agreement among Muslims scholars[39] that Islam is comprehensive, or as stated by the commonly used modern formula, that it is a religion and state (*al-islam din wa dawla*) or religion and world (*al-islam din wa dunnya*)[40] or the principle of non-separation between religion and politics (*din wa siyasa*).[41] According to these authors, Islam comprises faith, ethics and law set forth in the Qur'an, exemplified by the life of Prophet Muhammad (the *Sunnah*) and later developed by Muslim theologians and jurists (the *ulama* and *fuqaha*) into the *shari'ah*. To apply the *shari'ah* requires social organization and a state. However, God in his wisdom left the details of political organization to the Muslim community to decide according to its needs and aspirations.

If government organization is a matter of convenience and mere techniques, then the adoption of democracy may be acceptable, recommended and mandatory provided this does not lead to the neglect or violation of Islamic norms and values.[42] At the core of this agreement are shared assumptions that all people are born equal, having been installed as God's vicegerents on earth, that government exists to ensure an Islamic life and enforce Islamic law, that sovereignty (*siyada, hakimiyya*) ultimately rests with God alone, who has made the law and defined good and evil (*al-ma'ruf wa'l-munkar*), the licit and the illicit (*al-halal wa'l-haram*), that the authority (*sulta*) to apply God's law has been transferred to the community as a whole and that the head of the community or state, no matter whether he be called imam, caliph or president, is the mere representative, agent or employee of the community that elects, supervises and if

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[39] These are Sunni Arab mainstream thinkers, including members of the Egyptian and the Jordanian Muslim Brothers and the Tunisian Islamist Movement, led by Rashid al-Ghannoushi (formerly the movement de la Tendance Islamique and Hizb al-Nahda, as well as individual authors committed to the Islamic awakening (*al-sahwa al-ifdamiya*) such as Muhammad 'Imara, Muhamamd Salim al-Awwa, Fahmi Huwaydi, Fathi 'Uthman and others.

[40] Ibid. Gudrum Kramer, p. 73.

[41] Ibid. Olivier Roy, p. 62.

[42] Ibid. Gudrum Kramer, p. 75.

necessary, disposes him, either directly or via its representatives.[43] Disagreement (*ikhtilaf*) is allowed in Islam. Two important ideas set the conceptual limits in the Islamic heritage for disagreement and opposition: *fitnah* (civil disorder) and *ikhtilaf* (disagreement). *Fitnah* is being condemned and *ikhtilaf* is allowed in the Muslim community.[44]

The Islamic state was never a theocracy that claims a divine right over the people. Modern Islamic thinkers such as Khayr al-Din al-Tunisi (d.1899), Abdel Rahman al-Kawakibi (d. 1902), Mohammad Abduh (d. 1905) and even Abu al-A'la al-Mawdudi (d.1979), after considerable reservation, said

> Democracy is congruent with the teachings of the Qur'an and the *Sunnah.* It simply means that the country does not belong to a particular person, class, or group but to all those people who live in it. Therefore, its administrative system should fall in line with the wishes of all these peoples, or at least of the majority of them. Their right to elect leaders, by the exercise of their free will and to replace them in a similar manner should be conceded in principle.[45]

The holy Qur'an clearly states that the aim and purpose of this state is the establishment, maintenance and development of those virtues with which the Creator wishes human life to be enriched, and the prevention and eradication of those evils in human life, which He finds abhorrent. The Islamic state is intended neither solely as an instrument of political administration nor for the fulfillment of the collective will of any particular set of people. Rather, Islam places a high ideal before the state for the achievement of how it must use all the means at its disposal.

The constant demand made by Islam is that the principles of morality must be observed at all costs and in all walks of life. Hence, it lays down as an unalterable policy that the state should base its policies on justice, truth and honesty. It is not prepared, under any circumstances, to tolerate fraud, falsehood and injustice for the sake of political, administrative or national expediency. Whether it is relations between the rulers

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43 Ibid.

44 Ibid. Esposito and Voll, p. 41.

45 Ibid. Dr. Fathi Osman, Conference Report, p. 8.

and the ruled within the state, or the relations of the state with other states, precedence must always be given to truth, honesty and justice.[46]

A *shura* (advisory council) is also elected by the people to assist and guide the *amir* (leader). It is incumbent on the *amir* to administer his country with the advice of this *shura*. The *amir* may retain office only so long as he enjoys the confidence of the people and must relinquish it when he loses that confidence. Every citizen has the right to criticize the *amir* and his government and all reasonable means for the expression of opinion must be made available.[47]

In Islam, the judiciary is not placed under the control of the executive. It derives its authority directly from the *Shari'ah* and is answerable to Allah. The government appoints the judges but once a judge occupies the bench, he must administer justice impartially according to the law of Allah. The organs and functionaries of the government are not outside his legal jurisdiction so that even the highest executive authority of the government is liable to be called upon to appear in a court of law as a plaintiff or defendant. Rulers and ruled are subject to the same law and there can be no discrimination on the basis of position, power or privilege. Islam stands for equality, and scrupulously adheres to this principle in social, economic and political realms alike.

In Islam, the rights of citizenship are not confined to people born in a particular state. A Muslim ipso facto becomes the citizen of an Islamic state as soon as he sets foot on its territory with the intention of living there and thus enjoys equal rights along with those who acquire citizenship by birth. Every Muslim is to be regarded as eligible for positions of the highest responsibility in an Islamic state without distinction of race, color or class.[48]

Islam has also laid down certain rights for non-Muslims who may be living within the boundaries of an Islamic state and these rights must form part of the Islamic constitution. In Islamic terminology, such non-Muslims are called *dhimmis* (the covenanted), implying that the Islamic state has entered into a covenant with them and

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[46] Ibid. Speech by Mawdudi.

[47] Ibid.

[48] Ibid.

guaranteed their protection. The life, property and honor of a *dhimmis* are to be respected and protected in exactly the same way as that of a Muslim citizen. There is no difference between a Muslim and a non-Muslim citizen with respect to civil or criminal law.[49]

The Islamic state may not interfere with the personal rights of non-Muslims, who have full freedom of conscience and belief and are at liberty to perform their religious rites and ceremonies in their own way. Not only may they propagate their religion, they are even entitled to criticize Islam within the limits laid down by law and decency.[50]

Within multi-religious Third World societies, democracy may sometimes precipitate conflict rather than prevent it. The Ivory Coast in West Africa has more Muslims than Christians. Muslims have been under-represented in the political institutions throughout the postcolonial period. However, the Muslims were better off when the Ivory Coast was a one-party state under a Christian leader (Felix Houphouet-Boigny) than they are now that the Ivory Coast is a multiparty system with Christians more terrified of Muslim numerical strength at the polls.[51]

In Nigeria, more people have been killed in Christian-Muslim clashes since Nigeria's return to democratic civilian rule in 1999 than were killed in such clashes in the preceding 10 years of military rule. The debates about instituting the *Shari'ah* in some Northern Nigerian states have been non-violent in most of the North, but the Kaduna state especially experienced one of the worst outbursts of sectarian bloodshed in less than a year after civilian rule was restored in Nigeria. Hundreds of people were killed in 2000, and thousands were displaced.[52]

So how can an Islamic society be established? Disagreement between Muslim scholars has existed on this point throughout the history of Islam. Most acknowledge the necessity of controlling political power. The moderates are partisans of re-Islamization from the bottom up through preaching, establishing sociocultural movements while pressuring the leaders, in particular through political alliances, to promote Islamization

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[49] Ibid.

[50] Ibid.

[51] Muslim Democrat, Published by the Center for the Study of Islam & Democracy (CSID), Washington, D.C. Volume 3, No. 1, April 2001.

[52] Ibid.

from the top by introducing the *shari'ah* into legislation. This was the politics of the founding fathers, Al-Banna and Mawdudi, who accepted the notion of revolt only if the state took a resolutely anti-Islamic stance and if all means of peaceful protest had been exhausted.[53]

Meanwhile, radicals consider that compromise with current Muslim society is not possible. They advocate political rupture and introduce the concept of revolution. Sayyid Qutb put this concept forward. He fashioned himself as the theoretician of rupture and inspired the revolutionary groups of the 1970s. His analysis turns upon two concepts of *jahiliyya* and *takfir* or excommunication, which is the act of declaring that someone who professes Islam is in fact, an infidel or *kafir*. Moderate Islamists reject the concept of excommunication, by considering, in the tradition of the *ulamas*, that an unjust power is preferable to a division in the community (*fitna*).[54]

B.   CONCLUSION

From the argument put forward by all Muslim scholars, ultimately, it is the interpretations of the principles of Islam that will maneuver the Muslim nations into the form of government seen fit for modern society in this century. Since democracy is the "only game in town", there is ample guidance from the Qur'an and the *Sunnah* to accommodate Muslim nations adopting democratic values towards governing a state without straying from the given *shariah*. Potential leaders of Muslim nations must be decisive and adoptive in order to play the current political game of this century while also being able to convince the *ummah* and the population of the requirements in order to be at par or be able to demand the equal right of the state in world communities. As Esposito states, "As Muslim rulers and politicians, whatever their degree of religiosity or ideological orientation, have always had to contend with the political sensitivity of Islam, and like it or not, they must contend with popular support for democratization."[55]

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[53] Ibid. Olivier Roy, p. 41.

[54] Ibid. p. 42.

[55] John L. Esposito and John O. Voll, "Islam and Democracy," Oxford University Press, New York, 1996, p. 194.

If Islam recognizes "consultation" and "difference of opinion" as salient political features of the Muslim community, then it should not be surprised to see that these principles are developed over time through the amelioration of liberated rationality into a political philosophy called "democracy".[56]

No one can deny that for the last few centuries, Muslims have been steadily loosing the historical race. The torch of civilization and humanity has been passed on to other nations and other peoples because of misinterpretation, rigidity and going against the wave of democratization. This has resulted in Muslims not being the principal beneficiaries of the modern world, which is not their creation. One need not haggle over the claim either that the issues of global justice and interstate morality must be squarely addressed if the current world-order is to retain a modicum of legitimacy and ensure its survival as a community of nations. Similarly, one cannot be lax in underscoring the urgency and immensity of the task ahead for Muslims to interpret the Qur'an to the best of their ability for the good of the state. Ayatollah Khomeini a Shi'i even espoused during his rule the Sunni concept of, "public interest (*maslahah*), a doctrine that permitted the state to violate citizens' rights for the common good and for Islam's long term interests,"[57] if Muslims intend to become movers of history again.

Any future revival of Islam as a faith and civilization would certainly require an abundance of will, sacrifice and devotion. It would indisputably be contingent upon all the resources of intellect and imagination, and it cannot do without a resolute commitment to common humanity and universal morality. To indulge in a politics of despair and advocate the creation of an alternate world system is sheer madness. Islam as a revealed faith is based on the acceptance of the ultimately transcendent nature of truth and reality. Islam does not equal democracy, but certainly elements of it can be adopted and as long as there is a commitment to moral authority, and the sources of Islam remain guarded and not manipulated, then democratic approaches to government appear to be quite Islamic.

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[56] Ibid. Md. Moniruzzaman., p. 103.

[57] Ervand Abrahamian, "Khomeinism: Essays on the Islamic Republic," University of California Press, Berkeley and Los Angeles, California, 1993, p. 57.

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III. THE ROLE OF ISLAM IN MALAYSIA

A. INTRODUCTION

In many areas of the Muslim world, including Malaysia and Indonesia, one of the crucial issues defining their political future is the relationship between the forces of Islamic resurgence and the development of democratic political systems. Governments and political leaders throughout these Muslim worlds will then walk a thin line to try to balance their act between responding to popular sentiments for greater political participations and at the same time accommodating the activities of these religious movements. As Esposito and Voll mentioned

> Rulers and regimes are forced to choose among policies of repression and greater popular participation, with the threat that if they make the wrong choice, they themselves could lose power. Islamic movements and their leaders face similar critical choice between adaptable or violent opposition.[58]

In Malaysia, in contrast to some revolutionary opposition and the subsequent creation of new political systems, Islamic movements have been and continue to be active and participate within the framework of the existing political systems. With the recent incident of September 11, 2001 in New York, a few Muslim nations were mentioned and criticized by the United States (US) and its allies for failing to clamp down on Islamic militants. When looking at political change in Malaysia, the Western nations were perplexed when, "it seems to be Islamic political parties that are pushing against the perceived authoritarianism of the Mahathir regime."[59] The democratization movement in Malaysia is even more complicated for outsiders because the leader of this country is a woman who covers herself. How can that be compatible with outside concepts of democratization and the strengthening of civil society?[60]

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[58] John L. Esposito and John O. Voll, "Islam and Democracy," Oxford University Press, New York, 1996, p. 3.

[59] Douglas E. Ramage, "Introduction: Democratic Transitions and The Role of Islam in Asia," Asian Perspectives Series, The Asia Foundation, October 18, 2000, Washington DC. p. 1.

[60] Ibid.

As Esposito, pointed out

Transnational activist movements have very limited visibility and appeal, when one examines the experiences of the new Islamic movements and their relationships with the processes of democratization. It is the national movements, which seek to Islamize the existing political units that are of greatest importance.[61]

These movements in turn will provide a basis of understanding between the relationship between Islamic resurgence and democratization. Factors such as the legality of the movements, the degree of the society's involvement in local politics, the reaction of governing political leaders of the country and the interference or support of external big powers towards these societies and movements will determine this relationship. External interference was illustrated by the US with the downfall of the Taliban government in Afghanistan and Al-Qaeda's movement.

In the Muslim world, defining "Islamic democracy" is always being contested and challenged in a way that is appropriate both in the demands of increasing popular political participation and in the desire to establish a clearly and authentically Islamic polity.[62] Confronted with rising Islamic opposition, Malaysian Prime Minister (PM), Dr. Mahathir bin Mohamad, faces a democracy with complex connections. In Malaysia, Islam is the official religion but the freedom of religion is complete. While trying to provide some guarantees to the electorate, the PM is cautious and careful not to burn any bridges with the West, which is economically and geopolitically vital for this modest country. The PM had to tread lightly between two competing temptations of the Muslim world. One was confessional/religious confinement and the other was cultural alienation.

As the PM pointed out during an interview on Muslim terrorism[63]

We have seen the emergence of a group comprising Muslims who want to turn Malaysia into what they call an Islamic state. As they could not impose themselves through the ballot boxes, they tried to topple my government.

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[61] Ibid. Esposito and Voll, p. 8.

[62] Ibid. Esposito and Voll, p. 18.

[63] Dato' Seri Dr. Mahathir bin Mohamad, " Islam Sees Itself As Oppressed," Interview with *L' Expansion Magazine of France*, Issue 22 November to 6 December 2001, Prime Minister's Office, November 13, 2001.

Pertaining to development, he says

In every Muslim community, you will find a minority of the people who would like to create an Islamic state and will try to stop the government from developing the country economically. Instead of encouraging Muslims to study, to acquire skills, they just told them to study religion and nothing else.

Concerning Muslim faith, he states

Today, certain extremists distort these teachings to serve their personal and political ambition. An Islamic country works on achieving development and peace, it wants to maintain good relations between the communities.

Touching on ethnicity, he says

It is necessary to maintain a balance in the levels of economic development between the different ethnic groups in Malaysia to ensure its stability. Giving up a part of our potential growth so as to maintain a peaceful domestic environment constitutes a necessary judgment.

With the anecdote from the Malaysian PM, the impact of Islam, pluralism and the Malay Sultanate in Malaysia will be elaborated on in this chapter followed by a discussion on Islam as a source of legitimacy for Malay politics. The emergence and the influence of Islamic societies upon Malaysian politics will then be discussed as will, lastly, the impact of all these issues on democratic governance, human and women's rights and race relations in Malaysia.

B.   ISLAM, PLURALISM AND THE MALAY SULTANATE

Islam in Malaysia, embraced by about 55% of the country's 22 million people, is both a religion and ethnic identity because most Muslims in the country are also Malays. Though Islam is the religion of half the country's population, its influence on Malaysian life is central given the political and cultural pre-dominance of the Malay-Muslim population.[64] The remaining population of Malaysia is comprised of ethnic Chinese (35%), ethnic Indians (8%) and small indigenous groups (2%). The Muslims in Malaysia are predominantly from the *madhhab Al-Shafii*. During the early years, the practice of

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[64] Dr. Satu Limaye, "Islam in Asia," Chief Research Division, Asia-Pacific Center for Security Studies, Honolulu, Hawaii, April 16, 1999, p. 10.

Islam in Malaysia was embedded in the local cultures, and in particular, Buddhism and Hinduism, that have been important pre-Islamic influences in Malaysia. Therefore, inter-ethnic and inter-religious coalition parties, whether in opposition or as ruling parties, has dominated the country's electoral politics in post-independence politics.

Politically, Malaysia is remarkable because it is the only Southeast Asian country, aside from Singapore, that has held free elections at approximately regular intervals since its independence. Unlike the armed forces in many neighboring countries, its military is clearly subordinate to civil power and there has never been any threat of a military coup.[65]

1. The Arrival of Islam

The background of Islamic contemporary politics in Malaysia is critical to understanding the present political environment. Indian and Arab traders conveyed Islam in the 15th century. It became the dominant religion of Aceh (Sumatra), and Malacca had an active and influential Muslim, though mostly Tamil Indian, minority. Although there had been an earlier Muslim on the throne, it was not until the 1445 coup against the Hindu Maharaja Sri Parameswara Dewa Shah, an exiled Hindu prince from Sumatra who was slain, and the succession of his Muslim half-brother, Sultan Mudzaffar Shah, that Islam became firmly entrenched.[66] Islam was made the official religion of the state, and Malacca became a sultanate. To garner support, the new sultan brought some of the leading Malay families into the government, thereby precipitating the process of a peaceful conversion of the Malays to Islam. Malacca reached the zenith of its power in the next 60 years and became the primary center for the dissemination of Islam throughout the archipelago.

One of the lower levels of politics was the control of outlying villages, which was vested in *penghulus* (headmen) of whom an idealized picture is presented in the 16th century Malacca Code. To carry out their functions, the *penghulus* had to acquaint themselves with the following codes: first, the *Hukum Shari'ah* (Islamic Law), second,

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[65] R.S. Milne and Diane K. Mauzy, "Malaysia: Tradition, Modernity, and Islam," Westview Press, Boulder, Colorado, 1986, pp. 1-8.

[66] Ibid. Milne and Mauzy, pp. 11-12.

the *Hukum Akl* (principles of natural justice), third, the *Hukum Faal* (principles of right conduct), and fourth, the *Hukum Adat* (custom and customary law).[67] Though in practice the order of these requirements might well be reversed, and seldom find realization in any one man, they signified the great importance of the *penghulu* in Malay village life in the early days.

Malacca's glory days came to an abrupt end in 1511 when the Portuguese conquered it. In the 16th century, the Portuguese vied with the Dutch for control of the eastern Indonesian island spice trade, and they both sought to establish this trade by controlling the sea-lanes. The Malacca royal family, members of the government and many followers fled to Johore and Brunei. Those who fled to Johore established a new empire at the tip of the peninsula and recruited Bugis mercenaries from Sulawesi to help fight its enemies. When the fighting was over, the Bugis remained, became involved in court rivalries, and assumed power behind the Johore throne by the 1720s. They also established their own sultanate in Selangor, attacked Kedah, and supported a rival sultan in Perak.[68]

2.   Pluralism

British interests in the region grew by the late 18th century. Subsequently, Singapore, Malacca and Penang were joined administratively to form the Straits Settlements under the British East India Company. In the 1850s, large new deposits of tin ore were found in the states of Perak and Selangor. The small Malay population had little interest in working for wages or leaving their villages. Therefore, Chinese laborers from Hong Kong were recruited to work in the mines. To work the millions of acres of tropical forests for the production of rubber, palm oil and coffee, the British imported in thousands of laborers from India and China.[69] This was the beginning of the development

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[67] Willaim R. Roff, "The Origins of Malay Nationalism," Published by Oxford University Press, New York, 1994, p. 6.

[68] Ibid. Milne and Mauzy, p. 12.

[69] Ibid,.Dr. Satu Limaye, p. 10.

of a plural ethnically divided society in Malaysia.[70] The result changed the face of peninsular society forever.[71]

The Japanese occupation between 1941-1945 touched off ethnic and religious conflicts. Though a faction of a Malay nationalist movement welcomed the Japanese occupation, other Malays joined with the British in an anti-Japanese front. The British, still the colonial rulers of Malaysia after the Second World War, sought to contain the ethnic conflict by attempting to establish a unitary state (Malayan Union), where feudalism would be abolished and equal citizenship granted to all. However, this attempt at a unitary state failed which precipitated the formation of the United Malays National Organization (UMNO) in May 1946 led by Dato Onn Jaafar, who came from an aristocratic Johore family. In 1948, an alternative federation scheme was proposed by the UMNO in lieu of the Malayan Union. It is this federation system that persists today as the government structure for the country.[72]

The establishment of the federation system was significant as some state powers were restored. First, the functions of the rulers were reinstituted. Second, Malay "special rights" were restored. Third, strict citizenship provisions, seen as the key protection for the survival of the Malay race, were instituted.[73] UMNO's victory in securing the federation agreement solidified Malay nationalism. As a result, the UMNO has been the dominant political force in Malaysia from that point on until today.

As they consolidated their power in the final years of the 19th century, the British not only accorded Malay rulers prerogatives in Islamic and customary matters, but also provided them with bureaucratic and legal machinery to implement their directives in a more systematic and invasive manner than ever before in Malay history.[74] One reason the rulers chose to exercise these prerogatives so liberally was that this allowed them to fend off challenges to their authority, particularly from the reform-minded modernist Muslims

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[70] Ibid, Milne and Mauzy, p. 15.

[71] Robert W. Hefner, "The Politics of Multiculturalism: Pluralism and Citizenship in Malaysia, Singapore, and Indonesia," University of Hawai'i Press, Honolulu, USA, 2001, p. 18.

[72] Ibid. Dr. Satu Limaye, p. 11.

[73] Ibid. Milne and Mauzy, p. 23.

[74] Ibid. Robert W. Hefner, p. 16.

known as "*kaum muda*" or the young group. The young group Muslims was unimpressed by the idea that the interests of Islam were best served by aristocratic rulers. The young reformists had an only marginal effect on the Sultan's power. However, the colonial linkage of state and Islam was to have a profound influence on the postcolonial evolution of religious pluralism in Malaysia.[75] Thus, the Malay constitution of 1957 preserved and perpetuated the identification of Islam, the sultans, and Malay-Muslims.

3. Malay Sultanate

As the head of Islam, the sultan is the embodiment of holy divinity (*rahmat*). He is God's representative on earth. Hence, the exalted position in Malay culture and society. However, it is a mistake to assume that this is the natural order of things in all Malay societies and at all times. [76] The modern and educated Muslims of Malaysia today have reverted to the *kaum muda's* thoughts of the 1920s and 1930s. In fact, Professor Ungku Aziz, himself an aristocrat of the Johore royal family and Malaysia's eminent economist and educator, feels very strongly that the institutions of the monarchy are anti-democratic by nature.[77]

> More extreme is the opinion of Dr. Khalifa Abdul Hakim when he says

> In an ideal Islamic state there could be no kings, no feudal lords, and no capitalists with a plethora of wealth. It will be a society of good middle-class people who are the backbone of every healthy society.[78]

M. Bakri Musa in his chapter on "the Sultan Syndrome" aptly describe the characteristics, peculiarities and behavior, or more accurately misbehavior, of the excessive sultans and their extended families and hangers-on of Malaysia. Not only is this syndrome restricted to royalties, the Malaysian elites, particularly politicians and top civil-servants alike, behave in such a manner that they are more concerned with elaborate receptions and pretentious briefings to justify their paid vacations on government expense

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[75] Ibid.

[76] Ibid. Bakri Musa, "The Malay Dilemma Revisited: Race Dynamics in Modern Malaysia," Published by toExcel, New York, 1999, p. 91.

[77] Ibid.

[78] Dr. Khalifa Abdul Hakim, " The Prophet and His Message," Published by the Institute of Islamic Culture, Lahore, Pakistan, 1987, Chapter 19.

rather then executing their primary duties of solving the nation's many unsolved problems.[79]

The institution of monarchy by its very nature encourages a non-competitive and non-productive milieu. This negative influence affects all Malaysians and more so the Malays. Non-Malays have learned to successfully exploit royal institutions to their benefit. Lavish gifts, tributes, and other expensive professions of loyalty, while not exacting a quid pro quo, nonetheless, are appropriately reciprocated with royal favors, and in particular, to rich business tycoons.[80]

The royals receive royal treatment and generous civil allowances for themselves, and their ever-expanding extended families. Their royal pedigree opens up lucrative business opportunities and government contracts; possibilities not readily available to commoners.[81] This perpetuates the feelings of unfairness among the hardworking common Malay businessmen who have no blood links to the royal family. More so, the qualification of most of these sultans as guardian of Malay and the Head of Islam is nothing to boast about. Needless to say, the dissatisfaction among the educated professional middle class Malay population towards the Malay sultanate is increasing.

C.   ISLAM AND MALAY POLITICS

A distinctive characteristic of Malaysian political development is the role of political Islam in Malay politics. It was not until the federation scheme had become a fait accompli, bringing with it a demonstration of UMNO-led Malay power, that Chinese and Indian nationalism became Malaya-centered. The Malayan Chinese Association (MCA), formed in 1949, and the Malayan Indian Congress (MIC), formed in 1946, turned their attention toward protecting and promoting the rights of their respective ethnic communities.[82]

The art of governing in an ethnically diverse society such as Malaysia is to ensure that the interests and feelings of various ethnic groups are not unduly slighted. In the

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[79] Ibid. M. Bakri Musa, pp. 83-95.

[80] Ibid. M. Bakri Musa, p. 95.

[81] Ibid. M. Bakri Musa, p. 85.

[82] Ibid. Milne and Mauzy, p. 24.

early years of independence, because of the salient and controversial nature of "the bargain" (Islam as the official religion, the special rights of the Malays and *Bahasa Malaysia* as the national language), the focus in Malaysia was mainly on the Chinese and to a lesser extent, the Indians.[83] Sources of discontent were augmented in 1963 with the addition of Sabah and Sarawak, about which whose inhabitants the federal government knew little. There were also sources of discontent among Malays. The Pan Malaysian Islamic Party (PAS) represented a major center of dissent, which could outbid the UMNO on its greater devotion to Islam or its stronger commitment to Malay nationalism.[84] The constitution establishing the Federation of Malaysia was not, however, enough to prevent further ethnic conflict. Indeed, the worst riots took place in May 1969 and led to a new set of policies that were to give further strength to Malay-Muslim dominance or *bumiputra* (sons of the soil).

1.   NEP and Formation of BN

The New Economic Policy (NEP) was initiated in 1971 in response to the 1969 riots. The policy was designed to be a pro-Malay affirmative action policy. Its direct effect was to lead to an Islamic resurgence, especially amongst the Malay Muslim Youth. While in its initial years the NEP concentrated on redressing socio-economic imbalances, today it is also concerned with issues such as identity and culture with Islam at the center.

Beside the NEP, the Alliance (UMNO, MCA and MIC) also consolidates electoral support on the basis of both ethnicity and class. The Alliance concluded agreements with four former opposition parties: the Sarawak United People's Party (SUPP), Gerakan Rakyat Malaysia (Gerakan, Malaysian People's Movement - the governing party in Penang), the People's Progressive Party (PPP), and Partai Islam Se-Malaysia (PAS – Pan-Malaysia Islam Party, which ruled the state of Kelantan) to form the Barisan Nasional (BN – National Front). With this coalition, the remaining opposition party is the Chinese based Democratic Action Party (DAP). On June 1, 1974, two other parties, Parti Pesaka Bumiputra Bersatu (PBB) in Sarawak, and the Sabah Alliance joined the BN. However, coalition problems surfaced and in 1977, PAS crossed over to the

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[83] Strategic Analysis Malaysia, " Governing a Multi-ethnic, Multi-religious Malaysia," Issue No. 5, 2001, Bangsar, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.

[84] Ibid.

opposition over what PAS believed were UMNO encroachments into its political territory in Kelantan.[85]

2. Socio-Economic Development

As mentioned earlier, and in contrast to most other Muslim countries, the Islamic revival in Malaysia was a religio-ethnic resurgence. Many factors coalesced after post 1969, as a result of NEP, to produce a Malay-Islamic resurgence in which religion, economics, language, and culture were intertwined. This is more evident among the younger generation of Malay students and university graduates. These students were uprooted from their ethnic homogeneity, integrated life, and security of predominantly Malay rural environments. They were thrust into modern urban cities, which were far more culturally diverse and experienced as they were westernized and dominated by Chinese "yellow culture".[86] They then turned to their Islamic heritage to preserve their sense of Malay-Muslim identity.

Malay students returning from studying in the United States and Great Britain, who were greatly influenced by the writing and thinking of Islamic activists from the Arab world, Iran, and Pakistan, further reinforced Islamic revivalism in Malaysia.[87] All these students proclaimed an Islamic alternative, a common reassertion of Islam as a total way of life and a God-ordained alternative to the excesses of capitalism and socialism. This new wave of Islamic reawakening contributed to increased government concerns and sensitivity to Islamic sentiments and issues. To capture these potential voters, the government thus embarked on the Islamization process.

3. Malay-Muslim Votes

Voting is not compulsory, and all Malaysian over the age of 21 are eligible to vote. Since the first federal elections in 1955, parliamentary elections have been conducted as constitutionally required.[88] In the federal elections held between 1959 and

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[85] Ibid. Milne and Mauzy, p. 48.

[86] Ibid. Esposito and Voll, p. 127.

[87] Ibid.

[88] Edmund Terence Gomez and Jomo Kwame Sundaram, "Malaysia", in Ian Marsh, Jean Blondel and Takashi Inoguchi, eds., *Democracy, Governance, and Economic Performance: East and Southeast Asia*,

1990, voter turnout ranged between 70% and 78.9%, while the turnout in state elections during the same period ranged between 71.7% and 78.9%.[89] Parliamentary seats contested for elections were 52 in 1955, 104 (1959, 1964), 144 (1969), 154 (1974, 1978, 1982), 177 (1986), 180 (1990), 192 (1995), and 193 (1999).[90] By the 1990s, UMNO's main bastions of support were still the peninsula's rural Malays and Sabah's rural Muslim *bumiputras*.[91] Meanwhile, the Chinese populations are centered in urban areas.

Given the UMNO's vastly superior membership base and extensive party machinery, during elections, most BN parties depend on the UMNO to run an effective campaign to secure electoral support. In the 1986 and 1990 general elections, even the leaders of the MCA, Gerakan, and MIC acknowledged that their electoral victory was due primarily to the Malay support that the UNMO had managed to secure for them.[92] This reliance change in 1999. It is estimated that about 65% to 70% of Malay-Muslim voters turned against the UMNO and the BN in the general election held a year after the dismissal and detention of former deputy premier Anwar Ibrahim in 1998. Similarly, about 60% of Chinese voted otherwise.

Barisan Alternatif (BA- Alternative Front)[93] in the 1999 election won a total of 42 parliamentary seats, of which PAS won 27 seats, Keadilan (National Justice Party) won five seats, DAP won 10 seats and Parti Rakyaat Malaysia (PRM- People's Party of Malaysia) a secular Malay base party, did not win any seats. The Sabah opposition party, Parti Bersatu Sabah (PBS- United Sabah Party) that is not a component of BA won 3 seats.

The United Nations University Press, Tokyo, Japan, 1999, p. 231.

[89] Ibid.

[90] Strategic Analysis Malaysia, "Islamic Politics in Malaysia: A Larger Context For Reformation," Issue 4, 2001and NSTP, 23 April 1995.

[91] Ibid. Ian Marsh et al., p. 234.

[92] Ibid. Ian Marsh, et al., p. 234.

[93] A new political party was born following the political turmoil of former deputy PM Anwar Ibrahim's sacking and the wave of discontent sweeping the country then. Anwar's wife, Dr. Wan Azizah Wan Ismail, heads the new party, the National Justice Party or Keadilan. The emergence of the political alliance just before the 1999 election had evidently been based on a general acceptance of the need for a stronger opposition and an attempt to build a single multiracial front for the opposition forces. (Source: Strategic Analysis Malaysia, Issue 3, 2001).

In 1955, PAS won one out of the 52 seats in the national legislature. Its best performance to date was in 1999 when it won 27 seats in the Parliament and captured two states to lead the opposition.[94] The political significance of the Islamic party lies in the dual facts that it has been able to open up and sustain Islamic discourses in Malaysian politics vis-à-vis the nationalist UMNO as well as to provide a political organization to dissenting Malays-Muslim, especially in the so called Malay-Muslim hinterland of Kelantan, Terengganu, Perlis and Kedah.[95]

The results of the November 1999 general election indicate that the non-Malay rallied behind the BN in even more spectacular fashion than in the 1995 election. Although wooed by the opposition BA parties to build a more democratic Malaysia, the majority of non-Malays were unprepared to give up the BN and its discourse of developmentalism.[96] Constitutionally, a party needs two thirds of the parliamentary seats (presently 129 seats) to form a government and to have the mandate to carry out any amendment to the 1957 constitution.

4.   UMNO

The BN coalition was launched in 1973 following the racial strife of 13 May 1969, and is dominated by the UMNO. The UMNO had approximately 2.765 million members spread out among 17,355 branches in all parliamentary constituencies in the peninsula and Sabah.[97] Rural teachers and mainly conservative Malay nationalists dominated the initial stages of the UMNO. However, a consequence of the NEP, which was replaced by the National Development Policy, NDP, in 1990 until 2020, was that rich businessmen entered mainstream politics in the 1980s. "Money Politics" then

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[94] For details on the opposition and PAS Parliamentary and State seats, reference could be made to Ian Marsh et al., Chapter 9, p. 235 and Strategic Analysis Malaysia Issue 4, 2001. [http://www.analysismalaysia.com]. February 2002.

[95] Strategic Analysis Malaysia, Issue 4, 2001.

[96] Francis Loh Kok Wah, "Where Has (Ethnic) Politics Gone?: The Case of the BN Non-Malay Politicians and Political Parties," in Robert W. Hefner, ed.,*The Politics of Multiculturalism: Pluralism and Citizenship in Malaysia, Singapore, and Indonesia,* University of Hawaii Press, Honolulu, USA, 2001, pp. 183-202.

[97] Ibid. Edmund Terence Gomez and Jomo Kwame Sundaram, Quoted from New Straits Times, 6 September 1997, p. 236.

became a new phenomenon. Political patronage had thus become the key to wealth.[98] Meanwhile, Islamic resurgence also took root when PM Dr. Mahathir managed to persuade Anwar Ibrahim to join the UMNO to counter the un-Islamic labeling of the Islamic opposition party, PAS. UMNO's ideological stand is right of center, with strong neofeudal and conservative, traditionalist elements in the party's culture.[99]

UMNO's first leaders, Dato' Oon Jaffar, Tunku Abdul Rahman, Tun Abdul Razak and Tun Hussein Oon, were all members of the Malay aristocracy. Initially, the party was meant to be a nationalist organization that brought together the different political groupings within the Malay-Muslim community. However, in 1951, the ulama and religious functionaries within the party left to form their own organization, which later became the Malaysian Islamic party, PAS.[100] The "liberal democratic era"[101] of the first PM Tunku Abdul Rahman, came to an end after the 1969 riot. The government of BN lead by the UMNO defended their limited procedural democracy with three issues. First, public debates concerning sensitive ethnic issues should be stopped to avoid social unrest. Second, the standard of living of its citizens should be upgraded and third, there was a need to modify democratic values to historical and local environment objectives.[102] The leaders that call for a strong centralized government control, consider the interests of the community over individual liberty, discipline and cooperation, and uphold the values of obedience and thankfulness lauded new concepts such as, "Asian democracy", and "Asian values".[103]

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[98] Ibid. Ian Marsh et al., p. 238.

[99] Dr. Farish A. Noor, "The Globalization of Islamic Discourse and its Impact in Malaysia and Beyond," Institute for Islamwissenschaft, Freie Universitat of Berlin, 20 November 2000.

[100] Ibid. Dr. Farish A. Noor, p. 9.

[101] Syed Ahmad Hussein, "*Politik Muslim dan Demokrasi di Malaysia: Anjakan, Pertemuan dan Landasan Baru Persaingan Politik*," A Malaysian article and lecture document. He emphasized that the liberal democratic era is a continuation of the colonialist structures left by the British and in the context of local economics of being controlled by foreign capital investment made possible by an agreement between the bureaucrat-aristocrat Malay and Chinese businessmen. Pusat Pengajian Sains Kemasyarakatan, University Sains Malaysia, Penang, November 8. 1999.

[102] Ibid, Syed Ahmad Hussein article and lecture document.

[103] Ibid.

5. Mahathir's Era

Dr. Mahathir became PM of Malaysia in 1981. He introduced some reforms and liberalized newspapers, media, and freed some Internal Security Act (ISA) detainees. However, his liberalism led Tengku Razaleigh Hamzah, the then trade and industry minister, to challenge him for UMNO's presidency in 1987[104] and also led to the Chinese teacher's crisis.[105] PM Mahathir consolidated his "modified local democracy with a touch of authoritarian rule" by ensuring that he had a strong political base by eliminating his political enemies and retaining his loyal supporters. He then introduced and acknowledged English for international business and economic development. He prevented PAS from implementing *hudud* (Islamic criminal law) in the state of Kelantan. Mahathir declared that Malaysia's laws were in conformity with Islam by using the concept of *tawassut* (moderation) and *awlawiyyat* (priority).[106] He reaffirmed the values of pluralism and tolerance, and warned of religious extremism.

At the same time, the government continued to espouse a positive, reformist understanding of Islam and Islamic values by portraying Islam as a dynamic religion with a strong work ethic to support Malaysia's aggression approach to business and industrialization.[107] Vision 2020 was announced with a goal to make Malaysia a modern and industrialized nation by the year 2020. It must be a nation that is fully developed along all dimensions such as economically, politically, socially, spiritually, psychologically, and culturally.[108]

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[104] Tengku Razaleigh, Kelantan UNMO Chief, alleged that PM Mahathir had formed a kitchen cabinet, which had centralized decision-making powers, with most government contracts and business opportunities distributed to members of his inner circle. In the election, Mahathir narrowly clinched a victory by securing 51% of the UNMO's delegates vote to the General Assembly. However, Razaleigh and his "B Team" members filed a suit and accused them of having unregistered UNMO delegates. The party was declared illegal by the High Court in 1988. Mahathir immediately formed a new party, UMNO Baru (New UMNO), disallowed Razaleigh and a few ministers of membership. Razaleigh and his loyalists then formed the Parti Semangat '46 (Spirit of '46 Malay Party).

[105] In October 1987, the Ministry of Education had selected Chinese teachers not fluent in Mandarin to be the Headmaster of several Chinese schools. The process caused widespread resentment among educationists, the media and newspapers, and Chinese political parties. The Malay dailies and UMNO with its own internal problem considered this protest to be provocative. Racial tension once again escalated and the police took swift action dubbed "Operasi Lalang" by detaining about 119 personnel under the ISA. The government prohibited assemblies and rallies, and suspended three daily newspapers. PM Mahathir who said that it is necessary to avoid and prevent another racial conflict defended the government actions.

[106] Ibid. Syed Ahmad Hussein, article and lecture document.

[107] Ibid. Esposito and Voll, p. 140.

[108] Dr. Mahathir Mohamad, "The Way Forward," Published in Great Britain by Weidenfeld &

D. THE INFLUENCE OF ISLAMIC SOCIETIES

The Malay ethnic group has been divided politically, and therefore requires the support of either Chinese or Indians in order to gain political dominance.[109] This situation leads to a central fact in the country's political life that Malay-Muslim dominance has always been negotiated amongst various forces. In many Muslim countries, the Islamic agenda is dominated by the discourse of Islamic groups that demand the establishment of an Islamic state and the implementation of *shari'ah*. Within this worldview, there is little room for dissenting opinions, even for those of a more progressive reinterpretation of the Qur'an, a re-examination of the exegetical and legal texts of the classical scholars of Islam, and an analysis of how principles of justice, freedom, and equality can be applied in contemporary society.[110]

Post 1969 produced the growth of Islamic *dakwah* (call) movements. This call to Islam refers not only to proselytizing among non-Muslims but also to those Muslims born to Islam to become more observant.[111] As explained previously, the post NEP young generations call for the return to Islam as a total way of life by combining worship and social activism for a greater Islamization of Malaysia society. However, the *dakwah* groups differ in their interpretations of revivalist Islam and therefore had differing implications for personal and public life.

The movements and the Islamic societies that created a strong influence and a push towards the Islamization process embarked on by the Malaysian government are: *Darul Arqam* (the House of Arqam), ABIM (the Islamic Youth Movement of Malaysia), SIS (Sisters-in Islam) and JUST (the International Movement for the Just World).

1. Darul Arqam

Darul Arqam is basically an Islamic movement that wishes to return to the original version of Islam. Founded in 1968, by Ustaz (teacher) Ashaari Muhammad, it

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Niccolson, London, 1998, pp. 41-133.

[109] Ibid. Dr. Satu Limaye, p. 10.

[110] Zainah Anwar, "Perspectives from Malaysia," Asian Perspectives Series on, *Democratic Transitions and The Role of Islam in Asia* The Asia Foundation, October 18, 2000, Washington DC, pp. 3-7.

[111] Ibid, Esposito and Voll, p. 128.

emphasized the importance of establishing an Islamic society prior to creating an Islamic state.[112] It began as a study group among Muslim scholars and reformers comprised of university lecturers and academics. In time it evolved into a Sufi-inspired alternative lifestyle movement and apolitical in orientation that was very much centered on the personality of its founder. Its activities and members living in communities were based at Sungai Pencala, near Kuala Lumpur. The movement was concerned about policing the cultural and discursive frontiers of Muslim society and much attention was paid to the personal lives and behavior of its members. The movement encouraged its members to dress in authentic Islamic dress, which included Arab-style green robes, turbans and beards for men and a black *hijab* that completely covered the women.[113]

The movement discourse of purity and authenticity led them to establish factories producing purified *halal* (Islamically permitted) foods, drinks, make-up, soaps, toothpaste and other basic goods. By the early 1990s, *Darul Arqam* had become a powerful and wealthy organization with international offices. Some 48 *Darul Arqam* communities in Malaysia have their own schools and medical clinics. In addition, they run educational, agricultural, manufacturing, and social service projects, as well as restaurants and publishing houses.[114]

In 1994, the Malaysian government moved against the Darul Arqam movement by charging its leader, Ashaari, with engaging in radical politics, training a suicide squad in Thailand and conspiring to overthrow the Malaysian government in 1986. There was also a growing fear of the movement's influence spreading among the middle class students and professionals, its penetration of the UMNO elite, and its political agenda. Ashaari was arrested under the ISA for teaching deviant Islamic teachings and for being considered a threat to national security. The Government Islamic Council (Pusat Islam) issued a *fatwa* (religious edict) condemning *Arqam* as a deviant sect. Ashaari and his followers made public confessions on national television. *Darul Arqam* was disbanded,

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[112] Ibid. Esposito and Voll, p. 129.

[113] Ibid. Dr. Farish Noor's Article, 20 November 2000.

[114] Ibid. Esposito and Voll, p. 129.

its properties and institutions seized, and the group's members absorbed within the broader Muslim community.[115]

2. ABIM

The most vital, effective, and politically successful *dakwah* movement in the 1970s and early 1980s was the Islamic Youth Movement of Malaysia (*Angkatan Belia Islam Malaysi*a, or ABIM).[116] It was formed by a number of Malay-Muslim university student activists from the National Association of Muslim Students on 6 August 1971. As it developed, the movement became centered on the charismatic leadership of one its founders, Anwar Ibrahim, who served its president from 1974 until his resignation in 1982. ABIM's Islamic orientation was modern reformist rather than a return to the Islam of the more traditional *ulama* and of PAS.[117] The new generation of Malay-Muslim activists like Anwar Ibrahim and the leaders of ABIM were very much influenced by the ideas of local Malaysian Islamist scholars such as Seyyed Naguib al-Attas as well as foreign Muslim intellectuals and political leaders like Ab'ul Al'a Maudoodi (the founder of the Jama'ati Islami of Pakistan), Hassan al-Banna (founder of the Ikhwan'ul Muslimun of Egypt), Malek Ben Nabi of Algeria and the Islamist intellectual Ismail Raj Faruqi of the United States.[118]

ABIM is not a political party with its mission and goals to spread Islam and revitalize the Muslim community in Malaysia through preaching, communications, and education. In other words, "Islam first, Malay second," has been ABIM's motto since its inception.[119] ABIM's leaders condemned secularism per se and other western ideologies that they regarded as antithetical to Islam, and called for the purification of Muslim culture in the interest of creating a healthy Islamic society. They denounced corruption, poverty, maldistribution of wealth, the penetration of decadent western pop culture,

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[115] Ibid. Esposito and Voll, p. 130.

[116] Ibid. Esposito and Voll, p. 130.

[117] Ibid. Esposito and Voll, p. 130.

[118] Ibid. Dr. Farish Noor, Article, 20 November 2000.

[119] Shamsul A. B., "The Redefinition of Politics and the Transformation of Malaysian Pluralism," in Robert W. Hefner, ed., *The Politics of Multiculturalism: Pluralism and Citizenship in Malaysia, Singapore, and Indonesia,* University of Hawaii Press, Honolulu, USA, 2001, p. 220.

gambling, and alcohol consumption and called for greater political and press freedom and respect for human rights.

3.   Sisters-in-Islam (SIS)

In recent years, the Qur'an has become a touchstone for controversy as well as piety. Particularly prominent is the debate over the empowerment of Muslim women, who have become both combatants and prized for the struggle between western critics of Islam and their Muslim opponents. A recent discussion of the Qur'an from a feminist point of view is Amina Wadud Muhsin's, "Qur'an and Woman" (1992). First published in Malaysia, it is presently used as a manifesto by the "Sisters in Islam" movement. In her approach to the Qur'an, the American Wadud Muhsin attempts to lay the groundwork for a nontraditional *tafsir* from a scripturally legitimate perspective. She postulates a distinction between the historically and actually contextualized "prior text" of the Qur'an and wider metatext that conveys a more tolerant and universalistic worldview. Her conclusion is that while the Qur'an indeed acknowledged functional gender distinctions based on biology, it does not propose essential or culturally universal values for males and females.[120]

In Malaysia, SIS has played a leading role in pursuing the boundaries of women's rights within Islam and within the framework of a country that is fast modernizing and relatively democratic, as well as endowed with a federal constitution that respects the fundamental liberties and the equality of people before the law.[121] According to Zainah Anwar

> They were convinced that it is not Islam that oppresses women, but
> interpretations of the Qur'an influenced by natural practices and values of
> a patriarchal society. Besides, for much of Islamic history, it is men who
> have interpreted the Qur'an and the traditions for Muslims.[122]

SIS was set up as a working group of Muslim feminist intellectual activists in 1988 and was officially registered in 1993, with a mission, "to promote the development

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[120] The Oxford Encyclopedia of the Modern Islamic World, "Qur'an: the Qur'an as Scripture," p. 392.

[121] Zainah Anwar, "What Islam, Whose Islam?: Sisters-in-Islam and the Struggle for Women's Rights," in Robert W. Hefner, ed.,*The Politics of Multiculturalism: Pluralism and Citizenship in Malaysia, Singapore, and Indonesia,* University of Hawaii Press, Honolulu, USA, 2001, p. 227.

[122] Ibid. pp. 225-229.

of Islam in Malaysia that upholds the principles of equality, justice and democracy," which also takes on broader gender-related concerns and questions that relate specifically to Muslim women.[123] Through their publications, letter-writing campaigns, awareness generating forums and other activities, SIS has managed to raise the level of awareness over issues related to Islam and Muslim women's right in the country and beyond.[124]

4.   JUST

Created in Penang in September 1992, the International Movement for Just World (JUST) is a fully-fledged non-governmental organization (NGO) with international links and chapters created on 15 May 1997. As Dr. Farish mentioned, "JUST is a human rights NGO with a difference: working within the context of a largely religious and conservative society like Malaysia, the organization's founders feel the need to develop a discourse of human rights and fundamental liberties that would operate with and within the discourse of religion as well."[125] In addition, the organization has also been doing something that few other Islamist organizations have been able to do successfully. It has sought to promote inter-cultural and inter-civilization dialogue between Muslims and non-Muslims and tried to encourage a better understanding of non-Muslim religions, cultures and civilizations among Muslims as well.[126]

E.   GOVERNMENT AND ISLAMIC RESURGENCE

The identification of "caliph" with humanity as a whole, rather than with a single ruler or political institution, is affirmed in the "Universal Islamic Declaration of Human Rights", a document drawn up by the "Islamic Council of Europe".[127] In this framework,

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[123] Ibid. Dr. Farish Noor, Article 20 November 2000. Available on website:[http://www.sisterinislam.org.my/]. February 2002.

[124] Ibid. Dr. Farish Noor, Article 20 November 2000.

[125] Ibid.

[126] According to Dr. Farish Noor, The dialogue was conducted between two leading Malay Muslim and Buddhist social activists, Chandra Muzaffar and Sulak Sivaraksa. The participants of the dialogue discussed at length the problems that were faced by both Muslim and Buddhist societies at present and the challenges that lie ahead particularly in the rapid globalization of the world economy. Unlike other ecumenical approaches to inter-religious dialogue, this particular encounter was unique for the simple reason that the speakers in question did not debate matters of religion or theology, but rather the socio-cultural, economic and political problems affecting their respective communities and how these communities could attempt to address these problems progressively.

[127] Ibid. Esposito and Voll, p. 26. and Universal Islamic Declaration (London: Islamic Council of

the firsts phase of the "fulfillment of social-political *khilafah*" is "the creation of the community of believers," while the second phase "is to reach the level of self-governance." This perception of "caliph" becomes a foundation for concepts of human responsibility and of opposition to systems of domination in Muslim nations and their governing styles.

Until the late 1970s, the policy lines between the UMNO and PAS had been quite clearly indicated. Both held opposing views on Islamic law and the Islamic state. The UMNO looked on itself as the party of the Malays who were Muslims. Consequently, it was an upholder of Islam and Islamic values without being perceived as militant. Beyond the purely religious perspective, the UMNO did not see Islam as a source of trouble or an extravagance of economic development policies.[128] PAS' religious stance was more forthright than that of the UMNO. Since its inception in 1951, it had supported the idea of an Islamic state. Despite its rhetoric, which could sometimes be construed or perceived as revolutionary, the fact remains that it has thus far chosen to be committed to the system of parliamentary democracy by participating in general elections and by-elections.[129] In 1955, the party won one out of the 52 seats in the national legislature. Its best performance to date was in 1999, when it won 27 out of 193 seats and PAS managed to retain Kelantan and wrest the state of Terengganu from BN.

During the Islamic resurgence in the mid-1970s, a new generation of Muslim political activists such as Anwar Ibrahim and Fadzil Noor emerged and crystallized a socio-political movement of Islamic modernism in the organizational form of ABIM as described earlier. It attracted the widespread support of, and catered to, socio-education and spiritual/psychological needs of the younger, more educated, urban and modern Muslims, particularly tertiary students, who seemed to be facing a Malay/Muslim identity crisis as a result of modernization, as well as changes in socio-economic structures and roles.[130]

Europe, 1400/1980), p. 6.

[128] Ibid. Strategic Analysis Malaysia, Issue No. 5, 2001.

[129] Strategic Analysis Malaysia, " Islamic Politics in Malaysia: A Larger Context for Reflection," Issue No. 4, Bangsar, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, 2001.

[130] Ibid.

The political choice of those Islamic modernists differed. While Anwar Ibrahim, a former detainee under the Internal Security Act (ISA), chose to join the UMNO in 1982 with the declared intention of reforming the ruling party from within, Fadzil Noor opted to join arch rival PAS instead. Although both men joined different political parties, their agenda seemed to be the same, which was to endeavor to transform the UMNO and PAS from their originally Malay nationalist base into a more Islamic modernist movement. With the emergence of the Malay/Muslim based multiethnic National Justice Party, a third factor entered into Islamic politics and political discourses in Malaysia.[131]

1. Racial Tolerance

Despite the Islamic resurgence in Malaysia, racial tolerance and accommodation is still intact. Quoting Bakri's argument

> To many successful non-Malays, the special privileges accorded to *Bumiputras* evoke not resentment but resigned acceptance. This acceptance is greatly facilitated by a steadily growing economy. They recognize the essential difference between preferential treatment and active discrimination. Although the government favors *Bumiputras*, non-Malays are at liberty to pursue their own social and economic interests. They are free to fund their own schools, hospitals, and foundations.[132]

Malaysian also realized that ethnic hatred once aroused is extremely difficult to stifle. The trauma of 1969 still remains. Just as with the ethnic cleansing in Bosnia and the genocide in Rwanda, it will take generations to heal.

2. Predominant Race[133]

There is in reality no non-Malay dilemma. Non-Malays have accepted the legitimacy of the Malay language and ethos in Malaysia much as Japanese-Americans have accepted English cultural and language dominance. The continuing struggle in many plural societies is over establishing the alpha status of a culture or group.

Plural America is socially stable because immigrants have accepted the alpha status of Anglo-Saxons. German and French immigrants who are proud of their own rich

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[131] Ibid.

[132] Ibid. M. Bakri Musa, p. 223.

[133] Ibid. M. Bakri Musa, pp. 224-225.

and established traditions readily accept Anglo-Saxon dominance. Their names may be Shmidt and St. Pierre but they willingly learn to speak English, as do their children, and they love roast beef over frankfurters and fondue. Americans are proud of their melting pot model. They rightly point out their many interesting ingredients but there is no mistaking that the end product is essentially an American (or English) stew despite the Mexican spice, Italian wine, and French cheese.

Malaysia has eschewed the American melting pot in favor of its own "Salad Bowl" model. The lettuce being Malays. No lettuce, no salad. There may be onions and black olives to enhance the taste. Too strong an onion or too many black olives and the overall flavor are spoiled. Non-Malays, while accepting the predominant status of Malays, have maintained their ethnic heritage within the larger Malaysian context. Various cultural celebrations are still dominant, celebrated and enjoyed by all. With the world filled with the horror of ethnic violence in previously seemingly peaceful societies, Malaysians are fully aware of the consequences of not having the stability and harmony they presently enjoy.

3.   Intra Communal Conflict

M. Bakri wrote that

> The present state of racial tolerance in Malaysia is real and represents a fundamental change and maturation in the attitude of Malaysians. They value peace and racial accommodation. They have seen all too frequently the tragic consequences of communal strife elsewhere. The inter-communal clash in Malaysia as perceived by many is in actual fact very low in the measuring scale. High on the scale is a potential intra-communal conflict. There are three potential fault lines along which Malays could fracture – religious, ideological, and socio-economic.[134]

Malays have seen far too many splits along religious lines. The all consuming, totally unproductive, and tragically divisive *kafir-mengafirkan* (lit. infidels versus would-be-infidels) debate of 1987 clearly illustrates the potentially explosive nature of religious disagreements. Political leaders debase themselves in such silly pursuits of proving who among them are more pure or Islamic. In parts of Malaysia, there are separate mosques

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[134] Ibid. M. Bakri Musa, p. 273.

for the PAS followers and the other, presumably less pure, Muslims. There have even been instances of funerals and marriages boycotted because of political differences.

The 1985 Memali uprising in Kedah, PM Dr. Mahathir's home state claimed 18 lives and scores of injuries. It was the most violence disturbance since the 1969 riot. To the outside world, it was simply reported as an uprising of peasants over some land issues. It was, in fact, a mini civil war involving supporters of PAS and those of the central government (UMNO) between true believers and presumed pretenders.

Ideologically[135], there had been fights between royalists and republicans. In the 1980's constitutional crisis involving the sultans and executives branch, sudden intolerance of royal excesses were exposed extensively by the media. The depth and intensity between pro and anti-royal elements resulted in many split families and villages. The frightening aspect of that crisis was how quickly it degenerated, and threatened the very stability of the country. That feud was not the first to involve sultans. In 1948, the sultans opposed the appointment of a Malay civil servant to be Deputy High Commissioner, which is an administrative position within the colonial civil service. The sultans would not tolerate a commoner, the proposed candidate, to be their constitutional superior. Many other minor skirmishes involving the palaces were either downplayed or blacked out from the media but the republicans were keeping notes. Royal excesses have a long tradition in Malaysia and an opportunity for another "royal clash" exists which will probably is a more bloody and ugly scenario.

The social unrest involving "*reformasi*" may, in fact, be symptomatic of a social split along economic lines. Income disparity is greatest among Malays and getting worse. The average and poor Malays are frustrated because they have worked hard to improve their living standard and obtain a better income. Whereas a few hand picked individuals, politically connected, and the close relatives of elites, were instantly made millionaires, they did not do this through their own sweat or ingenuity but through the largesse of NEP and NDP. The black list, or the recipients of the government's many lucrative contracts and privatization projects, exposed by the PM during the UMNO General Assembly in

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[135] M. Bakri Musa elaborates extensively including ideological differences between socialist and conservatives but the scenario was of least important in my opinion. p. 271.

1998, revealed the extensive inefficiency and "crony capitalism"[136] that disgusted the hardworking average Malays. The "economically just society" envisioned by the PM is, alas, widening the economic disparities within the Malay community itself. It has, however, been successful in alleviating some of the gross inequities between the races.

F.   CONCLUSION

As M. Bakri pointed out, communal harmony is greatly enhanced when there are no gaping socio-economic and educational disparities between the various groups. The Islamic establishment must not, through its zeal and preoccupation for life in the world hereafter, lead its followers into economic decline. Muslims still have their present life to live, and live it productively. The best tribute to Islam is not for Malaysia to build ornate and grandiose mosques or to endlessly proclaim its lofty status as a state religion. Malays would best symbolize the glory of Islam by assuming their rightful place in the modern world. When Muslims once again contribute their share of inventive scientists, creative artists, and resourceful entrepreneurs, then they are indeed following His command.[137]

I certainly do agree with M. Bakri's comments that

There is nothing wrong with the old traditional Malay that new and enlightened leadership would not right. Frankly, Malays are battle-fatigued with calls for *revolusi mental* (mental revolution), *Melayu Baru* (new Malay), *berdikari* (self reliant) and the latest, *reformasi* (reformation).

Certainly, it is, "they (leaders, elites, and sultans inclusive) that have to acquire new ways of thinking and a new system of values and adjust their new thinking to the new realities as suggested by PM Dr. Mahathir."[138] The loss of Terengganu in the 1999 election I believe is not so much due to the resurgence of Islamic groups but to a voice of dissidence towards UMNO's elites and political leaders concerning their behavior and the "sultan's syndrome". The "culture of greed" that the PM had voiced during the UMNO's general assembly in 1993 came to fruition in the last election. Probably, the PM also unknowingly played his role in disseminating the wealth of the country to the privileged

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[136] Ibid. M. Bakri Musa, p. 260.

[137] Ibid, p. 82.

[138] Ibid, p. 126.

few. Decentralized contracts and projects to the lowest bureaucratic organization could be an alternative option to win the Malay-Muslim votes again. In other words, spread the wealth as low as possible rather than concentrating in on a privileged few. The progress and success of Islam is based on its *ummah* and not on any one individual.

On the Malay sultanate, M. Bakri further argues that, PM Dr. Mahathir's assertion that, "Malays are feudalist and wish to remain so without the rulers would mean the complete eclipse of the Malays," has no credence. Among modern Malays, especially those in the professional and private sector, the monarchy is irrelevant. It is persuasively argued that the monarchy is a hindrance to Malay society by impeding its progress. If all the resources allocated to royal institutions, such as luxurious palaces, tax-free status, elaborate ceremonies and investitures, were instead given to bright Malay students and rural schools, Malays would advance much faster.[139] Definitely this is so true when compared to American simple ceremonies and I just could not imagine how much savings and benefits would be distributed to the much-needed rural schools or amenities of the *kampongs* (village) folks if these excesses and ceremonies are minimized or totally eliminated.

At the political level, the battle for the hearts and minds of the Malay Muslims electorate has pitched the UMNO, the dominant Malay Muslim party of the ruling National Front government, and PAS, the Islamic party, in what many of us see as a "holier-than-thou" battle for the Malay vote.[140] In reality, this has been the case since 1982, when PAS was taken over by religious "young Turks," educated in Islamic theology, jurisprudence, and philosophy at Arab universities, and in particular, at Al-Azhar, in Cairo. With Keadilan as the third force, the political struggle to woo the Malay-Muslim population will continue in the future. With an even split between the three parties, the future political winner will be the votes of non-Malay as the final arbiter.

At the height of the public debate between PAS and its opposition ally, the DAP, on the Islamic State issue, the National Justice Party reiterated its rejection of an Islamic state but reaffirmed Islam as a way of life (*ad deen*) for Muslims.[141] PRM also shares the

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[139] Ibid. M. Bakri Musa, p. 94.

[140] Ibid. Zainah Anwar, p. 5.

[141] Ibid. Strategic Analysis Malaysia, Issue 4., 2001.

position of the National Justice Party. Following the rejection of the concept of the 'Islam State' by three out of four of the component parties of the Alternative Front, it seems that PAS is isolated in its ultimate objective.

A point to note, as in the electoral arrangement of the Alternative Front in the 1999 general election, PAS was allocated 64 parliamentary seats to contest and won only 27 seats. In order to amend the Federal Constitution, PAS or any other party needs at least 129 seats or a two-thirds majority in Parliament. Even the least probability of UMNO cooperating with PAS and National Justice Party to change the Federal Constitution to set up an "Islamic State" is impossible and not justified. The total number of parliamentary seats held by UMNO (72), PAS (27) and the National Justice Party (5) is only 104 or 25 seats short of the required number.

With regards to all the NGO's movement and society, and other social interest groups as Shamsul A. B. pointed out

> It is civic organizations, above all, that have contributed most to the reflowering of pluralism. This shift in political culture in contemporary politics involves a shift away from the colonially generated categories of race, ethnicity, and religion to something he termed, heuristically, an interest-based politics, largely non-communal and non-ethnic in nature.[142]

While the Malaysian government does not tolerate Islamic deviationist sects such as *Darul Arqam* or any future extremist organizations, NGOs such as SIS and JUST do have some influence and recognition. SIS, a local organization with strong international support and linkages, has played a very visible role in reorienting the direction of debates (the domain of *ulamas*) over issues related to gender, sexuality, human rights and inter-personal relations in the country. Meanwhile JUST ambitiously attempts to develop a deeper understanding of the struggle for social justice and human rights at the global level, which it believes, should be guided by universal spiritual and moral values rooted in the oneness of God.[143]

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[142] Ibid. Shamsul A.B in Robert W. Hefner, ed., *The Politics of Multiculturalism: Pluralism and Citizenship in Malaysia, Singapore, and Indonesia,* University of Hawaii Press, Honolulu, USA, 2001, pp. 204-225.

[143] Available on JUST website: [http://www.jaring.my/just/]. February, 2002.

Historically, Malaysia has managed to build a pluralistic state and managed to embark on its moderate Islamization process while sustaining Malay-Muslim privileges. The pluralism of Malaysian society has been a society of compromise, accommodation, and tolerance. Economic stability among the minority non-Malay is the factor that has managed to subdue communal tension and conflict. Meanwhile, the NEP has not only wrought major economic and social changes in Malaysia, despite its flaw of uneven wealth distribution, but it also redefined its politics. Islam in Malaysia is more visible today than ever before and it is a modern, "consuming Islam" as evidenced by the proliferation of Muslim financial institutions, medical centers, and social work organizations as well as tourist agencies and supermarkets.[144] Moderate Islam has been, is, and will continue to be uncontested in Malaysia.

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[144] Ibid. Dr. Satu Limaye, p. 11.

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IV.   THE ROLE OF ISLAM IN INDONESIA

A.   INTRODUCTION

In Aceh, a very troubled place, there is an extraordinary development related to Islam and democracy. Many of us are aware that large groups in Aceh are waging a separatist movement against Indonesia, and there is a lot of violence. Yet, however, the leading peace campaign is conducted by a *Muhammadiyah* Youth Organization (*Pemuda Muhammadiyah Aceh*) with a series of campaigns and publications that shock most Americans because they proclaim, "Islam loves peace," "Islam hates violence," and "Islam supports human rights."[145] Hundreds of thousands of these pamphlets are produced and put into the hands of almost every person in Aceh who attends Friday religious services at the mosque. This effort is executed by a mass-based Muslim organization in Aceh, and this program is supported by the Asia Foundation based in San Francisco and Washington DC.[146]

To the average Western mind, Indonesia is perhaps synonymous with its ancient Hindu-Buddhist temples with the wonders of Barabudhur and the graceful Balinese dance, arts and the abundance of various cultures in the "approximately 17,000 islands in the archipelago".[147] With 210 million people, it is the fourth largest population in the world with 300 ethnic groups and the world's largest Muslim community with almost 90% of the populace being Muslim.[148]

Interestingly Anderson noted, "A seventy-year old Indonesian man or woman today will have observed and/or directly experienced the following":

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[145] Douglas E. Ramage, "Introduction: Democratic Transitions and The Role of Islam in Asia," Asian Perspectives Series, The Asia Foundation, October 18, 2000, Washington DC. p. 1.

[146] Ibid.

[147] Lieutenant General Agus Widjojo, Indonesian Army, Deputy Speaker of the People's Consultative Assembly, "An Indonesian Perspective on the Post-September 11 Security Environment," Pacific Symposium on, *Addressing Transnational Security Threats in the Asia-Pacific Region,* National Defense University, Washington DC, February 20-21, 2002.

[148] Adam Schwarz, "A Nation in Waiting: Indonesia's Search for Stability," Updated Edition Westview Press, Colorado, , 2000, p. 163.

- As a primary school age child – the police-state authoritarianism of the last calm days of Dutch colonial rule and the abrupt collapse of this regime in March 1942 at the hands of Hirohito's armies

- As a young teenager – the wartime Japanese military regime of public executions, mass starvation and forced labor

- On the eve of adulthood – four years (1945-49) of popular struggle for national liberation against the re-imposition of Dutch rule. This was a time of violent social revolution against aristocrats and colonial collaborators, local pogroms against people of Chinese descent, anti-colonial warfare carried on by a semi-regular Republican army trained by the Japanese, as well as dozens of private militias, armed gangs and supporters of an Islamic state.

- As a young adult – in a time of a fragile liberal Democracy (1950-57), armed rebellions of different types in the Moluccas, Aceh, South Sulawesi, and in the West and parts of Central Java

- As a young father or mother – the CIA instigated and supplied civil war of 1958-60, and the spreading social violence of President Sukarno's "Guided Democracy", culminating in the cataclysm of 1965-66, when at least 600,000 and perhaps as many as two million people regarded as affiliated with the Indonesian communist party were slaughtered by the military under Suharto's leadership, in alliance with gangs of Muslims, Protestant, Catholic, and Hindu-Balinese youth groups

- In middle age – the New Order police-state, and its bloody attempt to annex East Timor, which cost over 200,000 East Timorese lives, as well as those yet uncounted numbers of Indonesian soldiers

- In old age – the spread of armed resistance to the state in Aceh, and West Papua, the savage riots of May 1998, which involved more than a thousand deaths and brought about Suharto's fall from power. The outbreak of inter-confessional warfare in the longtime peaceful Moluccas.[149]

Allow me to continue with:

- In the new century – a quick succession of three presidents, Habibie (1998-99), Wahid (1999-2001), and Megawati (2001-??). East Timor's independence, financial scandals that resulted in the impeachment and the removal of Wahid from office, outbreaks of new ethnic violence in Kalimantan and the first lady president from the secular-nationalist group.

During this high profile drama, Islamic parties played a crucial role during Wahid's election, his impeachment, and backing of Megawati for president. With such

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[149] Benedict R.O'G. Anderson, ed., "Violence and the State in Suharto's Indonesia," Southeast Asia Program Publications, Southeast Asia Program, Cornell University, Ithaca, New York, 2001, pp. 9-10.

upheavals and turbulent background, the present government's main concern is, "about constitutional reform that will bring about real democratic change while at the same time ensuring that Indonesia does not return to the volatile multi-party chaos of the 1950s."[150]

Following the above episodes, this chapter will examine initially the politics of Islam and ideology in 1945 in the Muslim majority nation of Indonesia that shaped the country into what it is presently. It will be followed by the role of the Islamic societies, and in particular, the *Nahdlatul Ulama* and *Muhammadiyah*, influences on the population, and politics in the Old and the New Order regime. Then, the role of Islam in the Armed Forces of Indonesia in the past and in the future of Indonesian politics will be elaborated upon and will conclude by discussing the Islamic political discourse faced by Muslims in Indonesia during the transitions to democracy.

B.   POLITICAL ISLAM AND IDEOLOGY IN 1945

1.   Javanese Islamic History

The arrival of Islam in Indonesia goes back nearly seven hundred years ago. Arab and Indian traders brought their faith with them along with the goods they bartered for the spices of the East Indies.[151] From its initial landing in Sumatra, Islam's influence gradually spread down through Java and the manner in which the Islamization process spread to all areas of Indonesia signifies the beginning of many processes of change. As noted by Ricklefs, "there is no evidence of foreign military expeditions imposing Islam by conquest".[152]

From the beginning, Islam did not displace or destroy existing cultural traditions, mainly Hindu and Buddhist, but produced a synchronized variation that is remarkably tolerant, pluralistic and non-coercive. Moreover, the proselytizing traders arriving on Indonesian shores were mostly steeped in the more accommodating Sufi school of Islam,

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[150] Andrew MacIntyre, "Indonesia," in Ian Marsh, Jean Blondel and Takashi Inoguchi, eds.,, *Democracy, Governance, and Economic Performance: East and Southeast Asia* United Nations University Press, Tokyo, Japan, 1999, pp. 261-281.

[151] M. C. Ricklefs, "A History of Modern Indonesia since circa 1300 to the present," 2nd ed.,, Stanford University Press, Stanford, 1993, pp. 3-13.

[152] Ibid. Ricklefs, p. 13.

rather than the orthodox Arab varieties.[153] By the end of 18th century, the winds of Islamic reform had reached Indonesia from the Middle East. The Malays of the archipelago were exposed to new schools of thought in the Muslim world ranging from *Wahabism* to Islamic reformism and modernization, which led to tension within the community as manifested by the *Padri* wars of the early 19th century.[154]

2.   Javanese Schism

The arrival of reform or modernist Islam widened the already apparent divisions within Indonesia's Muslim community. Adam Schwarz, quoting from the American anthropologist Clifford Geertz's study, "The Religion of Java", identified three broad types of belief among Java's Muslims: *abangan, santri and priyayi*.[155] The distinctions outlined by Geertz can be useful in a historical sense for understanding the forces that are currently at work in modern Indonesian Islam.

For the abangan Indonesian,[156] religion is a mixture of traditional mystical beliefs, Hindu-Buddhism and Islam. Avowedly tolerant and syncretic, *abangan* or nominal, Islam remains close to its Javanese roots. This sub-group is too indigenous and is understood as being influenced by pre-Islamic Javanese animism, though modern scholars have suggested that it is in practice more a derivation of Islamic Sufism and Indo-Persian Islamic precedents.

For *santris*,[157] Islam occupies a much more central place in their worldview. *Santris* are more concerned with Islamic doctrine, especially the moral and social interpretations of it. The *santri* outlook tends to be marked by a strong emphasis on the

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[153] Ibid. Adam Schwarz, p. 166.

[154] The Padri Wars in Sumatra were fought between 1828-1838. The ulama-inspired Padri movement was led by a number of local Hajis who had returned from Mecca and who wanted to introduce Wahabi-inspired reforms on the practices of the local Muslims. They declared a jihad against the political elite and the matrilineal customs of the Kingdom of Minangkabau, which they argued was un-Islamic. The Dutch colonial authorities finally intervened, taking sides with the Minangkabau royal family and its forces. However, by the end the conflict, the Minangs were overwhelmed and the Padris executed the Minangkabau royal family. The Dutch finally defeated the Padris in 1838. (Source: Dr. Farish A. Noor: The Globalization of Islamic Discourse and its Impact in Malaysia and Beyond, Institut fur Islamwissenschaft, Freie Universitat of Berlin, 20 November 2000).

[155] Ibid. Adam Schwarz, pp. 166-167.

[156] Ibid.

[157] Ibid. Adam Schwarz, pp. 166-167.

necessity for unreserved belief and faith in the absolute truth of Islam and by marked intolerance for Javanese beliefs and practices they think are heterodox. *Santris* see themselves as "purer" Muslim than *abangans.*

The *priyayi*[158] were Java's aristocratic elite. Originally clustered around the courts of the ancient Javanese kingdoms, the *priyayi* later formed the nucleus of the colonial bureaucracy. While the educated *priyayi* look down on the animistic features of *abangan* beliefs, their worldviews were traditionally considered to be closer to the *abangan* than to the *santri.*

In colonial times, however, the main difference between the *priyayi* on the one hand and *santris* and *abangans* on the other was more clearly seen in class than in religious terms. The *priyayi* were bureaucrats and administrators, and the *santris* and *abangans* were petty traders, merchants and peasants.[159]

3.   Javanese Politics

Politically, those who belonged to the *abangan* were more likely to be supporters of the Indonesian Communist Party, the PKI[160], while the *santri*, sometimes referred to by the *abangan* as 'pseudo-Arabs', were more likely to support one of the two leading Islamic parties of *Partai Persatuan Pembangunan* (PPP or United Development Party) or the nominally apolitical *Nahdlatul Ulama* (NU or Awakening of Religious Scholars).[161] President Sukarno in the Old Order and President Suharto with his New Order were both labeled as *abangans* with deep Javanese roots.

The portrayal of *santri* and *abangan* religious orientations reflected the polarized nature of Indonesian society during the Old Order that took organizational shape prior to independence. Two important Muslim groupings were formed in 1912, the *Muhammadiyah*, followers of the Prophet Muhammad, founded by modernist *santris* from urban areas, and the *Sarekat Islam*, Islamic Association, founded by men of similar

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[158] Ibid. Adam Schwarz, p. 167.

[159] Ibid. Adam Schwarz, p. 167. The *priyayi* category has become less relevant since Indonesian independence as the bureaucracy has opened up to the non-aristocratic classes.

[160] Java's *abangan* formed the basis of the PKI, as well as the Indonesian Nationalist Party (PNI).

[161] Damien Kingsbury, "The Politics of Indonesia," Oxford University Press Australia, 1998, pp. 12-13.

religious temperament, which saw its mission in more economic and political terms. In 1926, the more conservatives' *santris* responded to the *Muhammadiyah* by founding a mass organization of their own: the *Nahdlatul Ulama.*

4.   Islam During the Old Order

In the years preceding independence, the thread of nationalism, Dutch repression and the Javanese distaste of open conflict kept the *intra-santri* debate and the *santri-abangan* differences from becoming uncontrollably divisive.[162] After the Japanese expelled the Dutch in the early 1940s, the Japanese military actively courted Islamic groups and assiduously exploited Muslim anti-Dutch feelings.

In 1943, the Japanese showed more of the hesitation of the Dutch about drawing Muslims into state administration. They established a Department of Religious Affairs; supported the creation of a unified Muslim political federation, known as *Masyumi*, and eventually as the threat of Allied invasion loomed large, trained Muslim militias.[163] Brief as it was, the period of Japanese occupation from March 1942 to August 1945 had decisive long-term consequences for Indonesia. It gave Indonesians their first taste of a militarized state with a militaristic ideology by which they became, also for the first time, "Asians".[164]

During the first years of independence declared by Sukarno and Mohammad Hatta on August 17, 1945 the focus of heated political controversy that pre-occupied Indonesian organizations had been the role of Islam in shaping civil society and the nation's political institutions. Politically active Muslims that had hoped for a formal linkage of Islam and state to be stipulated in the state's constitution were disappointed at its exclusion in favor of the "five principles" of *Pancasila*. While concession to the first principle to read "belief in a singular god" was made, the *Pancasila* does not codify the implementation of *shariah* (Islamic law).[165] The statement, "Belief in One God with the

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[162] Ibid. Adam Schwarz, p. 168.

[163] Robert Hefner, "Civil Islam: Muslims and Democratization in Indonesia," Princeton University Press, New Jersey, 2000, p. 41.

[164] Benedict R.O'G. Anderson, Editor, "Violence and the State in Suharto's Indonesia," Southeast Asia Program Publications, Southeast Asia Program, Cornell University, Ithaca, New York, 2001, pp. 9-12.

[165] Ibid. Robert W. Hefner, p. 42.

obligation for adherents of Islam to implement the Islamic law (*shariah*)," known as the "*Jakarta Charter*" remains a political clarion call and will foster resentment of the Islamic community for years to come.[166]

Over the next six years, Muslim influences in national politics steadily declined. In light of the memory of the Madiun affair[167], Sukarno's ban on *Masyumi*, the PKI's attacks on the HMI (Association of Islamic Students), and PII (Indonesian Muslim Pupils), the collapse of *santri* businesses, and the efforts of some Javanese to repudiate Islam outright, Muslim leaders felt pushed to the limit.[168] In the Javanese countryside the most important partners in the anti-communist network were *Nahdlatul Ulama*, members of the now-banned *Masyumi*, and modernist youth organizations such as the HMI and PII, conservative nationalists and the armed forces.[169]

5.   Islam During the New Order

The watershed event of Indonesian political history is the coup attempt of September 30/October 1, 1965 which implicated the communist party in an effort to overthrow the government.[170] President Sukarno was stripped of his powers, political parties were marginalized, the once powerful communist left was destroyed, and a military coalition headed by Lieutenant General Suharto was in power with the "New Order" by 1967.[171]

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166 Ibid. Adam Schwarz, pp. 10-11.

167 Ibid. As narrated by Hefner, pp. 49-51, "The Madiun affair started in mid-September 1948, where violent clashes between pro-PKI and pro-government forces around Jogyakarta and Surakarta in Central Java. After being driven out of Surakarta, PKI forces amassed in the East Javanese city of Madiun. As they took control of the city, PKI militias began to kill anti-communist officials. Musso, Stalinist leader of the PKI, announced a new government of national revolution. Violence intensified. As pro-government forces marched on Madiun, communist rebels began slaughtering officials linked to *Masyumi* and the Nationalist Party. In the countryside, *abangan* supporters of the communist, alarmed by reports that their own leaders were being killed, began to kill their *santri* neighbors. When Madiun finally fell to pro-government forces, angry *santri* in nearby Surakarta took vengeance on local *abangan*, executing suspected rebel sympathizers. Despite its limited scale, the Madiun rebellion had a lasting impact on Indonesian politics."

168 Ibid. Robert W. Hefner, p. 54

169 Ibid.

170 Douglas E. Ramage, "Politics in Indonesia: Democracy, Islam and the Ideology of Tolerance," Published by Routledge, New York, 1995, p. 23.

171 Ibid. pp. 23-28.

Despite Islam's central role in the defeat of communist forces during 1965-1966, as a political force, it was sidelined during the first twenty years of Suharto's New Order. It was argued that a society based on religions, ethnic, regional, and class affiliations would not be capable of moving forward as an economically strong nation. Political Islam was accused of being sectarian in nature and therefore anti-*Pancasila.*

As mentioned in Robert W. Hefner, four different groups were involved in the struggle to shape the New Order religious policy during the earliest years. The four are the "secular-modernizers", moderate social democrats that were heir to the mantle of the Indonesian Socialist Party, the loosely organized array of Javanese mystical groups known as *aliran kepercayaan* (streams of belief) and the party of Muslim traditionalists, *Nahdlatul Ulama.*[172] The last group is the believers in the compatibility of Islam and modern civilization, modernist Muslims.

Hefner critically pointed out two issues that stand out in the early New Order, arising from these four grouping's complex evolution of religious polities. First, some in the regime's inner circle had strong Javanese or secularist convictions. Thus, religious interests ranked low on the hierarchy of values with which Suharto was concerned. His basic preoccupation was to hold power, stabilize the economy, and reap the benefits of development for himself and his family. In fact, the president did not hesitate to play one religious group against another in a manner that left a bitter uncivil legacy in Indonesian society. In 1984, the government escalated its ideological campaign requiring all social and political organization to acknowledge the *Pancasila* as their "sole foundation" or "*asas tunggal*".[173] Suharto's religious policies were inconsistent because they responded not to the cultural logic of Javaism but to the insistent demands of unchecked power.[174]

Secondly, determined in its early years to prevent any revival of organized Muslim politics, the regime's policies had the unintended effect of bringing about just such a revival. Intent in the 1980s on creating a pliant conservative Islam, the regime

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172 Ibid. Robert W. Hefner, p. 71.

173 Ibid. Robert W. Hefner, p. 121.

174 Ibid. Robert W. Hefner, p. 71.

stimulated the growth of pro-democracy Islam. His professed interest in depoliticizing Islam created an "ideology of tolerance".[175]

Theologically, some found this endorsement a very difficult step to take as it involved subordinating the Qur'an to a man-made ideological construction in *Pancasila.* For the Muslim, submission to God involves every aspect of life both now and in the hereafter, therefore an endorsement of Pancasila was viewed by many as the equivalent step to accepting another religion. As expressly forbidden by Allah in the Qur'an in Sura 3:85: "If anyone desires a religion other than Islam, never will it be accepted of him; and in the hereafter he will be in the ranks of those who have lost".[176]

Despite this, many Muslims were able to theologically justify such an endorsement. The principle used to achieve such a justification is fundamental to neo-modernist Islamic thought in Indonesia or that of a contextualized *ijtihad*. This builds on the approach of previous modernists in that it allows for the expression of progressive liberal thoughts within the context of strong religious faith.

Neo-modernist initiatives of the 1970s produced yet another group of Muslim woman activists who in August 1993 established the *Rifka Annisa* Women's Crisis Center. These women challenged the established tradition and worked to promote women's rights, not only in their own organization, but also with the *Muhammadiyah*-linked *Aisyiah*. In a real sense, *Rifka Annisa* is a meeting point for Muslim women activists from both *Muhammadiyah's* modernist and *Nahdlatul Ulama's* neo-traditionalist camps.[177] With the sub-activist groups within these civil-organization and contrary to most Muslim societies, they represent a potentially powerful political force with a vision to democratize Indonesia while championing for their cause.

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[175] Ibid. Robert W. Hefner, p. 72.

[176] The meaning of "The Holy Qur'an" Translated by Abdullah Yusuf Ali, Amana Publications, Maryland, USA, 1989, p. 150.

[177] Mohtar Mas'oed et all, "Social Resources for Civility and Participation: The Case of Yogyakarta, Indonesia," in Robert W.Hefner, ed.,*The Politics of Multiculturalism: Pluralism and Citizenship in Malaysia, Singapore, and Indonesia,*" University of Hawaii, Honolulu, USA, 2001, p. 131.

C.   NAHDLATUL ULAMA AND MUHAMMADIYAH

As Dr. Farish mentioned, the emergence of Malay-Muslim political organizations and religious associations such as the *Sarekat Dagang Islam* which was formed by Haji Omar Said Tjokroaminoto in 1911[178], the *Muhammadiyah*, which was formed by Kyai Haji Ahmad Dahlan in 1912[179], and the *Nahdlatul Ulama* which was formed by Kyai Haji Asyari in 1926, in Indonesia were very much part and parcel of a process of socio-cultural and political development that was spurred on by changes in the wider geo-political arena. Islamic groups emerged around the globe as sources of new initiatives for political change and development. As further emphasized by Esposito and Voll

> These movements represent the emergence of a major credible political and social alternative or circulation. The movements reflect the dual aspiration of modern-educated professionals in Muslim societies, who want greater participation in the political processes, and also want their societies to be more explicitly identifiable as Islamic. As a result, the new organizations bring together the two great trends of the late 20$^{\text{th}}$ century: religious resurgence and democratization.[180]

In Indonesia, there are a few such organizations, but the most significant and influential are *Nahdlatul Ulama* and the *Muhammadiyah.*

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[178] Haji Omar Said Tjokrosminoto and Haji Agoes Salim formed *Sarekat Dagang Islam* in 1911 as an offshoot of Islamic activism among Muslims in Java and Sumatra. It was intended to serve as a cooperative venture that would work to help organize and mobilize Indonesian Muslims and help them in the process of economic development. It emerged as a powerful force after the economic boycott against the powerful Indonesian Chinese trading community and the anti-Chinese riots in Surabaya. Its main aim, however, was to slowly work towards political independence by winning for the Indonesians their economic independent first. In time, the Sarekat was infiltrated by many reformers and leftists and a Sarekat Islam 'Merah' (red) faction developed. By the 1920s, *Sarekat Islam* had spread to the various Malay states in the Malay Peninsula. Sarekat Islam became more militant and fractionalized along political and religious lines. It was suppressed by the Dutch and within a decade had ceased to be a powerful movement, although the ideas it represented lived on with one faction forming the core of the PKI. (Source: Ibid, Dr. Farish A. Noor, Article, 20 November 2000 and Ibid, Adam Schwarz p. 167-168).

[179] The *Muhammadiyah*, a modernist and reformist Muslim organization that saw education as its primary goal was founded in 1912 under the leadership of Kyai Haji Ahmad Dahlan. It sought to modernize the standard of Islamic education given to Indonesian Muslims. It formed a woman's section under the name of *Aisiyah*. The *Muhammadiyah's* followers were keen to develop modern and progressive outlooks towards Islam, which would help Muslims cope with the challenges of living under modern colonial rule. They oppose the synergetic as well as the dogmatic trends that had developed within Indonesian Islam and hoped to renew the spirit of Islam by encouraging the return to the fundamental principles of Islam found in the Qur'an and *Hadith*. (Source: Ibid, Dr. Farish A. Noor, Article, 20 November 2000).

[180] John L. Esposito and John O. Voll, "Islam and Democracy," Oxford University Press, New York, 1996, p. 6.

1. *Nahdlatul Ulama* **(NU)**[181]

The Muslim organizations of NU and Indonesia make an important contribution to our understanding of the relationship between politics and religion, as it represents a significant deviation from the norms of a state-Islam interaction in most of the Muslim world. As related by Ulil Abshar-Abdalla

> In 1995, *Nahdlatul Ulama* assigned him in charge of training for Muslim leaders in villages. The interesting thing he found out about these trainings is that, in spite of some controversy, the Muslim leaders in these villages mostly accepts the modern ideas of human rights, democracy, and even gender equality. But because new ideas are not readily accepted without any reference to the classical teachings of Islam, any attempt to reconcile democracy and Islam must be accompanied be referencing the classical text. The training thus encourages Muslim leaders to participate in the reinterpretation of classical teachings in a manner that considers concepts of democracy and human rights. And he reiterate that it is this kind of Islam, an Islam that is ready to confront the new challenges of democracy and human rights, is the mainstream Islam of Indonesia.[182]

As highlighted by Robin Bush, "*Nahdlatul Ulama*" (NU) the 35 million-strong "traditionalist" Muslim organization, had successfully developed and propagated a thriving discourse of "civil-society", and with revered NU leader Abdurrahman Wahid, the Indonesian president from October 1999-August 2001, it seemed likely that a moderate, religiously tolerant expression of Islam would play an active role in the continuing democratization of Indonesia."[183] It is in this civic-society also that Hefner

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[181] The Nahdlatul Ulama (Renaissance of the Ulama) movement was started in Surabaya in 1926 by the conservative traditionalist *ulama*, Kyai Haji Asyari. From the beginning, the NU was seen as a traditionalist movement, which gained most of its initial support from the rural elite and communities in central and eastern Java. A conservative grouping, the NU's main source of membership and support came from the rural *Pesantrens* (religious schools) that were still functioning as decentralized centers of religious teaching whose attraction lay in the charismatic appeal of their individual *ulama*. The NU's main aim was not to work towards independence or political mobilization of the masses: instead it regarded the 'threat' of modernization as its primary concern. In the following years, the NU had chosen to adopt as instrumental and pragmatic approach to politics. It later supported the independence movement without engaging itself directly in political activities. In the post-independence period, the NU was fervently anti-communist. It later pulled itself out of political involvement altogether and only re-entered the political arena in the 1990s.

[182] Ulil Abshar-Abdalla, "Perspective from Indonesia," Asian Perspective series on, "*Democratic Transitions and the Role of Islam in Asia*," Asia Foundation, Washington D.C. October 18, 2000.

[183] Robin Bush, "Islam and Civil Society in Indonesia: The Case of *Nahdlatul Ulama*," A paper presented at a conference, *Consolidating Indonesian Democracy* He also noted that while acknowledging the problematic nature of the "traditionalist" versus "modernist" labels, he continue to use them largely because they are the most common labels used by Indonesian Muslims to self-identify, but also because they continue to signify very real sociological and even theological differences. "Modernist" denotes urban-based Muslims, who refer only to the Qur'an and *hadith* for divine guidance, while "traditionalist"

sees potential for having, "mediating institutions in which citizens develop habits of free speech, participation, and toleration."[184]

In 1984 at NU's Situbondo Muktamar (National Congress), Abdurrahman Wahid was elected to chair the *Taufidziah*, the administrative body governing NU. Under his leadership, NU withdrew from the PPP (United Development Party) and thus withdrew from formal politics altogether in a historic move called "*Kembali ke Khittah 26*" (Return to Khittah 26).[185]

NU is neither a purely religious nor a purely political organization, but a complex mixture of both. As illustrated by its maneuverability, NU occupies a position outside of the formal political system from which it was able to develop a discourse on critical civil society. Wahid began to develop a discourse of civil rights, human rights, and democratic values. The so-called "training" and seminars were held at villages, which were actually political educations, which for the first time, most of the participants had ever experienced, and they effectively became a grassroots mobilization tool for political participation. Later, as momentum for Suharto's overthrow was increasing, these local and newly 'trained' activists became important agents for reform and eventually participated directly in ensuring what some called Indonesia's first "free and fair" elections in 1999.[186]

Modernist and neo-modernist Muslim thinkers, on the other hand, articulated a view of civil society which focused more on fostering values of tolerance, pluralism, and rationalism, but which did not necessarily see civil society as separate from, and certainly not always oppositional to, the state.[187]

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refers to largely rural-based Muslims, who adhere to decisions of *ulama* from the classical era, as handed down within four primary *madhhab*, or schools of jurisprudence, Ohio State University, May 11-12, 2001.

[184] Ibid. Robert W. Hefner, p. 13.

[185] Ibid. According to Robin Bush's presentation paper, Khittah 26 was composed of nine points which laid out NU's religious purpose, the theological tenets upon which its purpose was based, its social agenda, its organizational function and role of the *ulama* within it, and its relationship with the state and nation. The political context at the time was that NU under the leadership of Idham Chalid and other politicians since 1952 and during the 1970s had been perceived by the New Order regime as oppositional, and thus had been 'punished' by the regime through the cutting off of funding, bureaucratic appointments, and other governmental 'favors'. This caused a fair amount of economic hardship for the organization in the late 1970s and early 1980s. Ohio State University, May 11-12, 2001.

[186] Ibid.

[187] Ibid. Robin Bush, p. 7.

Commenting on the New York Times about the growing militancy of Muslims in Indonesia, Ulil Abshar-Abdalla said that, "this is a small slice of the Muslim community in Indonesia. But sometimes, the media to symbolize the whole community in Indonesia or in any country, though it is a small sample captures this kind of Islam". This was exemplified by the fall of Suharto's New Order in May 1998, which was accompanied by a proliferation of new political parties, many of which were Islamist. There are some fifty Muslim parties and organizations and only two have distinguished themselves through the persistent use of violence, the *Front Pembela Islam* (FPI- the Islamic Defender Front)[188] and the *Lasykar Jihad*.[189] He reaffirmed that

> The dominant feeling in Indonesia is more pluralistic, more tolerant, and more liberal. The 1999 election demonstrated that political support for militant, conservative Muslims in the political arena is very limited. The fact that support for the Islamic parties was less than 15% and that even devout Muslims supported the secular parties, is evidence to the numerical strength of the moderates. This is further illustrated by 33% of the vote to Indonesian Democracy Party-Struggle (PDI-P), which is nationalist and secular".[190]

Ulil Abshar-Abdalla also highlighted that

> There was an idea of conducting a course in Jogyakarta where young activists, both university students and mass-based activists, learn about "Transformative Islam". This is particularly so, after post-Suharto Indonesia, whereby it is becoming a country of demonstration practically everyday in almost every city. The objective is to educate the activists about how to use Islam as a new foundation for dealing with social issues like injustice, military repression, and religious and ethnic intolerance.[191]

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[188] The Front has grown out of Indonesia's transition from authoritarianism and views on the Islamic state as a way to resolve many of the current socio-economic problems. It also sees itself as a defender of Muslim rights in the Eastern part of Indonesia. (Source: Ibid, Lt. General Agus Widjojo Pacific Symposium, February 20-21, 2002)

[189] Ibid. *Lasykar Jihad* is a paramilitary organization formed in February 1999 in response to the government's failure to act in the inter-religious and ethnic conflicts. *Lasykar Jihad* is a domestic rather than an international player, and promotes an Arab Islam as more authentic than Indonesian Islam. It has no links to Al-Qaeda and the roots are very different. The Talibans of Afghanistan are from the "*Khawarit*", a very strict and radical school of Islam, whereas *Lasykar Jihad* is "*Ahli Sunnah Wal Jamaah*". In Indonesia the Islam practiced by the Taliban is not at all popular as compared to the mainstream Islamic organization such as NU and *Muhammadiyah*.

[190] Ibid. Asian Perspectives, October 18, 2000.

[191] Ibid, Asian Perspectives, October 18, 2000.

This "training", like the one assigned to Ulil Abshar, focused more on issues such as human rights from a Muslim perspective; arguing the compatibility between democracy and Islam; and calling for religious tolerance and pluralism. These messages were all conveyed from the perspectives of *fiqh* (law).[192]

Another dimension to the civil society discourse described above is related to intra-Islamic relations. "*NU kultural*" (NU cultural) which Wahid promoted stood in opposition to "*NU politik*" (NU politics), or those who wished NU to return to formal politics. The central missions of NU cultural was to promote Islam as a religious, social and moral force in society and to oppose its use for political reasons as well as to oppose the formalization of Islam within the political system. Furthermore, they called for a practice of Islam as a tolerant religion co-existing with other religions, and rejected legalistic or fundamentalist expressions of Islam.[193]

The call for "*Islam Kultural*" became identified with NU as an organization, and put it directly in opposition with the modernist and Islamist groups referred to as "*Islam Politik*". These would include segments of *Muhammadiyah*, DDII (*Dewan Dakwah Islamiyah Indonesia* or Indonesian Council for Islamic Predication), Persis (*Persatuan Islam* or Muslim Unity Organization), and political parties PBB (Moon and Crescent Party) and PK (Justice Party) among others. Between the groups of "*Islam Politik*", the *Muhammadiyah* is the most influential.

2. *Muhammadiyah*

Early in the 20th century, a group of young scholars came home from their Islamic study in Mecca with a new, more puritan understanding of their religion, and a strong will to reform religious practices among their fellow Muslims whom they regarded as heretical, mystical or superstitious. Their reformist activities led to the establishment of Indonesia's first mass-based organization for Islamic reformation, the

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[192] As Robin Bush pointed out, to understand the strategy behind these efforts we need to understand that in most of rural Java, these *ulama* and *kyai* held absolute sway, much more than local political leaders. One *ulama* preaching his Friday sermon on human rights, which was code for opposition to Suharto's military dictatorship renowned for human rights abuses, could reach potentially thousands of listeners and wield much greater influence than any political pamphlets or banner. (Presentation Paper at the CSID Conference in Washington DC , "Democracy and Islam in Indonesia: NU as an Agent of Civil Society"). April 7, 2001.

[193] Ibid. Robin Bush's presentation paper, April 7, 2001.

Muhammadiyah.[194] Supported today by almost 30 million members, many of whom are well-educated urbanites, the organization has been a training ground for many Indonesian leaders.[195]

In the early 1990s, a young leader of *Muhammadiyah,* Mohammad Amien Rais, broke a political taboo by proposing to discuss plans for President Suharto's succession at a time when Suharto himself had announced no such plans.[196] Being challenged directly, the New Order leader mobilized his supporters in the Muslim community against Amien Rais. Almost overnight, Amien Rais, an American trained political scientist who had often been perceived as anti-American, anti-Jewish, and anti-Christian, attracted a lot of sympathizers and supporters from many non-Muslim groups in addition to his fellow *Muhammadiyah* members.[197]

With the new wind of change blowing, Amien Rais created a political party in 1998 called *Partai Amanat Nasional* (PAN) to mobilize popular support from different ethno religious groups. This new party allied a mass base of *Muhammadiyah* Muslims with smaller groupings of Catholics, Christians, Hindus, Chinese, secular middle-class activists and urban reformist youth groups.[198]

The party embarked on a new approach to politics, raising controversial issues such as proposing amendments to the 'sacred' 1945 constitution and called for a federal system of government in place of the existing unitary system.[199] The party failed to live up to expectation in the June 1999 elections when it came in fifth among the forty-eight contending parties. However, an opinion poll indicated that many respondents preferred Amien Rais as a presidential candidate to their own respective party leaders.

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[194] Mohtar Mas'oed, S. Rizal Panggabean, and Muhammad Najib Azca, "Social Resources for Civility and Participation: The Case of Yogyakarta, Indonesia," in Robert W, Hefner, ed., *The Politics of Multiculturalism: Pluralism and Citizenship in Malaysia, Singapore and Indonesia,*" University of Hawaii Press, Honolulu, USA, 2001, pp. 119-137.

[195] Ibid. Mohtar Mas'oed et al, pp. 119-137.

[196] Ibid.

[197] Ibid. Mohtar Mas'oed et.al.

[198] Ibid.

[199] Ibid.

Nevertheless, many observers still express doubts about his entourage of Muslim advisers and the sincerity of his pluralist commitments.[200]

D.   ISLAM AND THE INDONESIAN ARMED FORCES

In late 1958, while President Sukarno was speaking of the need for a "guided democracy" based on "Indonesian values", then, Army Chief of Staff, Major General Abdul Haris Nasution, was outlining a policy whereby the military would operate as both a military and sociopolitical force. Nasution's "middle way" came to be known as "*dwifungsi*" or the "two functions" in the New Order period.[201] Prior and after its dwifungsi, the Indonesian Armed Forces or *Tentara Nasional Indonesia* (TNI, National Armed Forces of Indonesia)[202] was and still is a significant player on the Indonesian social and political scene.[203]

Relations between Islam and the Indonesian Armed Forces have always been problematic. Many reasons can be offered to explain the troubled, and sometimes mutually suspicious relationship.[204] First, some in the military elite have been unhappy with what they regard as the factious and rebellious nature of the Islamic community. Specifically, the military elite has suspected that Islam has been a motivating force in regional rebellions in West Java, Aceh,[205] and South Sulawesi. Second[206], the military

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[200] Ibid. Mohtar Mas'oed, et al.

[201] Ibid. Robert W. Hefner, p. 45.

[202] Under the New Order regime, its generic term was *Angkatan Bersenjata Republik Indonesia* (ABRI). However, since April 1, 1999, in line with ABRI's internal reform, the name for the armed forces was changed to *Tentara Nasional Indonesia* (TNI). (Source: Robert W. Hefner, ed., "The Politics of Multiculturalism: Pluralism and Citizenship in Malaysia, Singapore, and Indonesia," University of Hawaii Press, Honolulu, USA, 2001, p. 307).

[203] Hermawan Sulistiyo, "Greens in the Rainbow: Ethno Religious Issues and the Indonesian Armed Forces," in, Robert W, Hefner, ed., *The Politics of Multiculturalism: Pluralism and Citizenship in Malaysia, Singapore, and Indonesia,* University of Hawaii Press, Honolulu, USA, 2001, p. 291.

[204] Expanded from the report by Dr. Satu Limaye, "Islam in Asia," Chief Research Division, Asia Pacific Center for Security Studies, Honolulu, Hawaii, April 16, 1999, p. 13.

[205] In Aceh, during the 1989 and 1990, a series of violent incidents occurred, allegedly carried out by a militant ethno-nationalist group. The Indonesian military called this group the "*Gerombolan Pengacau Keamanan*" (GPK), Gang of Security Disturbers. Most local people simply referred to this group as "*Gerakan Aceh Merdeka*" (GAM) or the Free Aceh Movement lead by Hasan di Toro. Between 1989-1993 the Indonesian Armed Forces mounted an intensive counter-insurgency operation against GAM. Their methods included extra judicial executions, disappearances, unacknowledged military detention, torture, and unfair political trials. The precise human rights toll of these counter-insurgency operations will never be known. Some thought that the so-called GPK violence in Aceh was engineered by certain elements within the Indonesian military as a provocation to justify a campaign of terror. Another possibility was that

leadership has tended to be dominated by either the *abangan* Javanese or secular nationalist and therefore, obsessed with its role as the guardian of national unity in an ethnically and religiously diverse society. They tended to regard attempts by Muslims to express political interests through protests on economic and cultural grievances with hostility. Third,[207] in terms of power politics, the military was inclined to deny a formal role to Islam during the New Order system of government out of concern that it would challenge its prominent position as an integralist based upon *Pancasila* and its *dwifungsi* (dual function).

1.   Schism in TNI

During the 10 years leading up to the New Order, the military had slowly expanded its power by, among other things, doing battle against what it called forces of the "extreme Left" (communist) and the "extreme Right" (Muslim separatist).[208] Despite the projection of united armed forces, Sulistiyo pointed out that

> The abortive left-wing officers' coup of October 1, 1965 was, in one sense, the culmination of political battles between PKI and the army. It also represented the culmination of factional conflicts within the armed forces themselves, between left and right, and, more generally, between factions distinguished by ethnicity, religion, and ties to different political parties.[209]

Under Suharto, to overcome such ethno-religious divides among the military, the government implemented policies prohibiting any political or social activity based on SARA (*Suku, Agama, Ras, Antara Golongan* or ethnic, religion, racial and inter-group relations) were adapted to the armed forces. As mentioned by Sulistiyo

the violence indicated conflicts within the military itself. (Source: Independence Australian writers, Leon Jones, who lives in Aceh in the lead-up to the violence that eventually left up to 2000 dead, and Kerry Brogen, a postgraduate student at the University of Sydney). Available at: [http://www.inside indonesia.org/edit49/leon.htm] February 2002.

206 Douglas E. Ramage, "Politics in Indonesia: Democracy, Islam and the Ideology of Tolerance," published by Routledge, London and New York, 1995, pp. 122-155.

207 Ibid. Ramage, , pp. 122-133.

208 Ibid, Robert W. Hefner, p. 95.

209 Ibid. Hermawan Sulistiyo , in Robert W. Hefner, ed., *The Politics of Multiculturalism: Pluralism and Citizenship in Malaysia, Singapore, and Indonesia,* University of Hawaii Press, Honolulu, USA, 2001, p. 296.

On the basis of concern like this, there was unwritten rule that an officer with a *Batak* ethnic background, for example, would not be assigned to serve as a regional commander (*Kodam*) of North Sumatra, the home of the *Bataks*. At lower levels of the military hierarchy, too, there were tour-of-duty programs that were intended to reduce the potential for ethno-religious sentiments becoming divisive influences inside the TNI.[210]

However, in interviews conducted by Sulistiyo, "many officers expressed the feeling that religious issues, rather than ethnicity, have recently played a more troubling role in the armed forces."[211] This was especially true in the late 1980s when Suharto started to use Islamic symbols. In fact, in December 1990, Suharto open the first national conference of the Association of Indonesian Muslim Intellectuals (ICMI), headed by B. J. Habibie, thus effectively erasing his *abangan* label and the perception of increasing Muslim participation in elite politics. This inclination also influences the military top ranking officers that started to use Islam as a rallying cry to increase their support in the army itself as opposed to the nationalists. Among them, known as the "green generals", were Feisal Tanjong, Hartono, Syarwan Hamid, and Prabowo who comprised the ascendant "Islamic" wing of the armed forces. As Hefner pointed out, "the Islam they supported was not that of *Nahdlatul Ulama*, *Muhammadiyah*, or the majority of Indonesian Muslims, but Suharto-dependent "regimist" Islam."[212]

Thus, within TNI, factional tensions grew especially between the "green" (regimist Islam) on one wing and a "red-and white" nationalist wing on the other. The Center for Policy and Development Studies (CPDS) was set up with the intention, "to become the leading think tank for regimist Islam and to serve as the bridge between ICMI regimists and military greens."[213] In fact, the regimist and ultra-conservatives Muslims under the direction of "green generals" were accused of masterminding the attack on PDI

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[210] Ibid. Sulistiyo in Robert W. Hefner, ed., *The Politics of Multiculturalism: Pluralism and Citizenship in Malaysia, Singapore, and Indonesia,* University of Hawaii Press, Honolulu, USA, 2001,, p. 297.

[211] Ibid.

[212] Ibid. Hefner, "Civil Islam", p. 151. As Hefner explained, the regimists advocated the Islamization of Golkar and the bureaucracy. They were adamant that there was no need for broader changes to the system. Muslim proportionalism was vital. They advocate status quo: Suharto's rule, military involvement in politics, *Pancasila* as the sole foundation, or big-power patronage in business.

[213] Ibid.

(Indonesian Democratic Party) Headquarters on July 27, 1996. This incident was seen as the initial scene that culminates with the downfall of Suharto in 1998.

2. TNI as the Kingmaker

In 1998, General Wiranto, seen as leading the "red-and white" camp, was promoted to commander of the armed forces. His first crucial test was, "triggered by the fatal shootings of students by army special forces at Trisakti University on May 12, 1998 followed by massive and bloody riots the following two days in five other Indonesian cities."[214] The riots also took an ugly twist when they took on an anti-Chinese character. As Sulistiyo elaborates

> The sudden shift in the focus of the riots – from political and economic to ethno-religious issues – showed once and for all that the New Order had seriously failed in its efforts to redirect racial, ethnic, and religious tensions. Resentment on the part of indigenous people toward a few wealthy Chinese linked to the military and civilian elite clearly contributed to the violence.[215]

General Wiranto moved carefully to replace or reassign "green generals" immediately after the resignation of Suharto. Besides the internal problems, the transitional period also called for TNI to deal with violent ethno-religious conflicts in the "*dukun* (sorcerers) killings"[216], the "Ketapang incident"[217], Ambon[218], and West

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[214] Ibid. Sulistiyo, in Robert W. Hefner, ed., *The Politics of Multiculturalism: Pluralism and Citizenship in Malaysia, Singapore, and Indonesia,* University of Hawaii Press, Honolulu, USA, 2001,. p. 299.

[215] Ibid. p. 300.

[216] Ibid. p. 303. According to Sulistiyo, the killings of local people accused as being dukun or sorcerers was stimulated through the use of mysterious leaflets and pamphlets. Names of people to be killed were listed on the leaflet signed by local Muslim leaders and preachers often associated with NU. Then, families, relatives, and friends of the victims, took revenge on the Muslim preacher. Hundreds of people were killed over a several month period.

[217] Ibid. p. 303. The Ketapang incident started as a criminal conflict. A group of Christian Ambonese hoodlums at a pool game place had a fight with a Muslim youth over a parking space. It later spread into the neighborhood pitting Christian Ambonese gang members against Muslims residents of Ketapang Street. Unconfirmed reports implicate agents "assigned" by pro-status quo forces to inflame religious and ethnic sentiments.

[218] Ibid. p. 304. The Ambon violence was linked to the Ketapang incident. Several hundred hoodlums boarded a ship from Jakarta to Ambon in the province of Maluku two weeks before January 31, 1999. A street fight between a criminal and a driver of public transportation in the city escalated into a full-scale ethno-religious conflict between Muslim and Christian Ambonese. More than 5000 people lost their lives in the riots. Again, political provocation was apparent in sparking the riots.

Kalimantan [219]. Popular beliefs say that active or retired military personnel designed the conflict for political purposes. TNI's imaged was tarnished by human rights abuses claimed by the various international human rights organizations. In fact the recently released 2001 country reports on "Human Rights Practices" by the US Department of State further amplified the accusations of human rights abused by TNI and the recently breakaway police department.[220] East Timor presented the most troubling case of all. Soon after Habibie took power, Indonesia presented its plan for granting greater autonomy to East Timor. Pro-independence activists in East Timor saw the potential turmoil in the Indonesian capital as a golden opportunity to finally achieve their goal. After mass violence and an estimated 200,000 deaths, the East Timorese won their referendum for independence in 1999 and this provincial separation signifies to many that the "balkanization" process of Indonesia is about to begin.

When Wahid was elected President, he attempted to dismantle the army's hold as kingmaker in Indonesian politics. However, towards his final days before impeachment, he reverted to the old hard line tactics used by Suharto, "in a last ditch attempt to hold on to his job, he declared a state of emergency ordering parliament dissolved immediately and calling for elections next year."[221] Again, when troops moved into place outside the palace in a show of support for the people and not President Wahid, during the impeachment, TNI was key in deciding the country's destiny. Remarks by Juwono Sudarsono, a former Defense Minister under Wahid summed it up as

> It is the politicians who have allowed the army to play the role of kingmaker, and only the politicians can rein the army in. The civilians have not got their act together, have not built a party system based on organized collective behavior, and they have lacked decision-making.[222]

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[219] Ibid. p. 304. Less than two months after the Ambon riots, Sambas and Singkawang areas in West Kalimantan experienced a similar explosion of violent conflict. The Singkawang-Sambas conflict started first as a criminal dispute, which continued as a communal conflict colored with ethnic issues. The violence took hundreds of lives and spread into Pontianak, the capital of West Kalimantan. In Pontianak, Malay-Muslims joined the Christian Dayaks to fight the Madurese. The conflict lasted one month and created some 30,000 refugees.

[220] US Department of State, "Indonesia: Country Reports on Human Rights Practices-2001," Released by the Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor, March 4, 2002.

[221] CNN.com/WORLD, "Analysis: "Mannequin" Megawati will lead by Consensus," July 23, 2001.

[222] Catherine Napier, "The Army as Kingmaker in Indonesia," BBC News, Asia-Pacific, Tuesday, 24 July 2001.

E.   ISLAMIC POLITICAL DISCOURSE

There are abundant resources in Muslim traditions for democratic politics but for these raw materials to become effective democratic "environmental and internal inputs", Muslims thinkers and scholars have to be willing to learn from their own history. Historically, politics in Indonesia has often made this delicate balance of religious idealism and political empiricism a difficult achievement indeed. Even though Islamic societies of modernist thoughts have tried to overcome this obstacle, the population as a whole has a long way to go to reach this destination. Promoting Arab Islam as more authentic than Indonesian Islam is neither pursuing a global nor a regional Southeast Asian Islamic agenda.

1.   Democratic Transition

The unraveling of Suharto's New Order was accompanied by the flare-up of ethnic and religious violence across Indonesia.[223] Added to that is the fear of impending chaos, anarchy and national disintegration being fuelled by the independence of East Timor and separatist sentiment not only in West Papua, and Aceh but in such untroubled place as Riau. On another level, the establishment of political and social organizations overtly premised on ethnic and religious allegiances is giving rise to fears about the reemergence of old political divides, especially those of ethnicity, religion, and ideology known a generation ago as *aliran* (lit. stream).[224]

As demonstrated in 1973, the MPR in opposition to organized Islam, imposed new regulations with restrictions to polygamy, gave women greater rights in divorce than recognized under Islamic law, and moved most of the authority for marriage and divorce out of Islamic courts. The New Order thus appeared to be moving away from its early position toward a secular modernist posture. Principle always played second fiddle to power politics. Bypassing the secular parliamentarians who had sponsored the marriage bill, military officials took charge of the negotiations with Muslim representatives over

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[223] Vedi R. Hadiz, "Mirroring the Past or Reflecting the Future? Class and Religious Pluralism in Indonesian Labor," in Robert W. Hefner, ed., *The Politics of Multiculturalism: Pluralism and Citizenship in Malaysia, Singapore and Indonesia,* " by University of Hawaii Press, Honolulu, USA, 2001, pp. 268-285.

[224] Ibid.

the marriage law. They negotiated directly with representatives from *Nahdlatul Ulama* and the state-created Islamic political party, the PPP.[225]

Again, during the 1970s and 1980s, tensions between organized Islam and the Suharto regime reflected age-old cultural conflicts. Suharto and the generals on whom he relied were brought up in a Hindu-Javanese milieu that made them more nominal (*abangan*) then practicing (*santri*) Muslims.[226]

As illustrated in the middle of March 1992, three months prior to elections, just weeks after hosting a mass rally at a Jakarta stadium, attempts were made by Lieutenant Colonel Prabowo Subianto (Suharto's son-in law) to persuade Wahid to endorse Suharto for another term of office. Although a showdown was averted, Prabowo's message highlighted two realities as pointed out by Adam Schwarz of modern Indonesian politics, "First, Suharto is not ready for any political activity, no matter how mild and innocuous, outside his direct control. Second, that despite the New Order's nearly three decade long campaign to neutralize civilian opposition, Islam is still considered a potent political force."[227]

The crackdown on the press in June 1994 marked the end of Suharto's limited liberalization and the beginning of the Islamization process in Indonesia. The new policy's intent was to neutralize the growing pro-democracy movement by mobilizing ultra-conservatives Muslims to his side. Regimist Muslims put into action plans to topple Wahid, the leader of NU, undermine Megawati and attempt to eliminate the alliance of "red and green" between Megawati and Wahid.[228] All these events marked the return to the hard line tactics of the early New Order and indirectly endorsed Megawati as the leader of a revitalized pro-democracy movement. Meanwhile, Wahid and Nurcholish Madjid, the two outspoken leaders of the Muslim community, chose a long-term strategy of democratization. They chose to avoid violence and hoped to achieve this through the slogan "civil society" or "*masyarakat madani*", a kinder and gentler road to democracy. The divide-and conquer strategy of Suharto's rule was a tactical blunder when he chose

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225 Ibid. Robert W. Hefner, "Civil Islam", p. 81.

226 Ibid. Robert W. Hefner, pp. 82-83.

227 Ibid. Adam Schwarz, p. 163.

228 Ibid. Robert W. Hefner, pp. 167-189.

to back the ultra-conservatives Muslim rather than the majority moderates. Suharto's supporters' appeal to ethno religious hatred only stiffened the resolve of the great majority of Muslims leaders for democracy, nonviolence and the rule of the law.[229]

2.   Back to the Future

The present president, Megawati, inherited a difficult task. As mentioned in the Far Eastern Economic Review

> Indonesia's democratization since 1998 has opened politics to new players and new power centers but today, with the ruling elite trying to balance these elements without causing itself too much financial pain, it seems that the more things change, the more they stay the same. Corruption flourishes in new, inventive ways, there is no functioning structure to penalize wrongdoing, economic and legal reform is at a standstill and businessmen are still refusing to repay debts. Indeed, more than 3 years after Suharto's downfall, there is little fundamental difference in how Indonesia's 210 million people are being governed.[230]

In fact, there are elites who recalled as an afterthought, the good things, such as stability from the New Order. Stability is something Indonesians want after years of political turmoil and communal violence.[231] One of the more unusual aspects of Indonesian political history is the fact that democratic socialists, not market liberals, were the primary carriers of the liberal-democratic ideals of freedom, and equality to the Indonesian public.[232]

3.   US/Indonesia Relations

As related by Kingsbury and Burchill

> Following the visit by US Secretary of State Colin Powell and Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld, security issues in the East Asian region are much clearer. A widespread belief that Indonesia is edging towards disintegration should now be laid to rest. It has become a truism of secessionism that, to be successful, it often requires the support of an active external sponsor as exemplified by Panama from Colombia

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[229] Ibid. Robert W. Hefner, pp. 189-207.

[230] John McBeth, "Indonesia: Nothing Changes," Far Eastern Economic Review, Issue cover-dated November 01, 2001.

[231] Ibid.

[232] Ibid. Robert W. Hefner, p. 72.

(supported by US), Bangladesh from Pakistan (India), Soviet Union, Yugoslavia (US and NATO), and East Timor (Portugal and the United Nations).[233]

By the same token, the "balkanization" process in Indonesia also needs external support. The only country that has the capacity to meaningfully support secession is the United States. To do this, as Kingsbury noted, "the US would need to be convinced that its strategic and economic interests were best served by such a political separation."[234] For many countries, considerations of morality and decency were outweighed by the profits to be had from close economic ties with Indonesia and its huge population. As gushed by the president of Coca-Cola in 1992, " When I think of Indonesia, a country on the equator with 180 million people, a median age of 18, and a Muslim ban on alcohol, I feel like I know what heaven looks like."[235]

On his recent visit to Indonesia, Rumsfeld said that he would like to see renewed military aid to Indonesia's armed forces, the TNI. This is despite a lack of meaningful reform of the TNI. The reason for U.S. support of the TNI is simply because the Bush administration has decided that, as a part of its renewed focus on East Asia, the unity of Indonesia serves a greater strategic purpose.[236]

F.   CONCLUSION

Suharto did guide Indonesia to considerable economic growth. However, the final decade of his 32-year rule, which ended with his resignation in 1998, turned Indonesia into Asia's emblem of corruption and decadence, of a government for profit of a privileged few. Suharto's immediate successor, B. J. Habibie, was left with the task of beginning a process of democratic reform. He freed the press, opened the door to new political parties, and albeit under duress, agreed to hold new parliamentary elections in June 1999.[237] There were high expectations that AbdurrahmanWahid, who took office in

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233 Damien Kingsbury and Scott Burchill, "Megawati's Indonesia and US Regional Policy," School of Australian and International Studies, Deakin University, Burwood Victoria, Australia, August 2001.

234 Ibid.

235 Stephen R. Shalom, Noam Chomsky, and Michael Albert, "East Timor: Questions and Answers," Available on[http://www.zmag.org/crisesCurEvts/Timor/qanda.htm] February, 2002.

236 Ibid. Kingsbury and Burchill. Article August 2001.

237 Ibid. Adam Schwarz, Introduction.

October 1999, would bring political and economic reform. However, in two years he changed from being the one man who could command a coalition of political support, to the one man who could unite Indonesia's politicians in opposing him.

Megawati began her term in office with great promise by appointing well-regarded economic ministers, the "dream team". Unfortunately, this team already shows signs of paralysis because it is largely due to the lack of political will on the part of the president. As Sarwono Kusumaadmadja, a former cabinet minister under both Suharto and Wahid commented, "It's the New Order without the leadership and without the vision."[238]   What has changed is the way power has become distributed between a diminished presidency, a newly empowered Parliament as seen in the impeachment of the former President Wahid, and the influence it now wields over legislation, and a reduced military role, that for the moment, is content to take a political back seat. However, the press is one of the freest in the region. The undercurrents will be strong in the years ahead as the three power centers struggle to strike a balance and because of the resurgence of the Islamic parties maneuvering for the 2004 elections.

Megawati Sukarnoputri is unlikely to be the kind of leader to single-handedly pull Indonesia out of its economic and social morass.[239] In fact, given her unpopularity amongst traditional Muslims, Megawati is seem as a short-term leader, beholden to the armed forces for her new position. A moderate but more devout Muslim from one of the many civil Islamic organizations or parties will probably be the future president in 2004.

Professor Abootalebi in his article wrote

> The prospect for the emergence of civil society depends on the characteristics of the people who form that society in the first place. The better educated, healthier, wealthier, and more organized the people, and the more broadly these resources are spread, the stronger will the society be in protecting itself from domination by the state. Moreover, these resources allow for the formation of institutions that act as the focus of activity where differences in opinions and policies can be debated and resolved without resort to violence."[240] Obviously, this principle does not fit into Suharto's "divide and conquer strategy".

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238 Ibid, Far Eastern Economic Review, Issue-dated November 01, 2001.

239 CNN.com./World, Analysis: "Mannequin" Megawati will lead by Consensus, dated July 23, 2001.

240 Ali R. Abootalebi, "Islam, Islamist, and Democracy," Middle East Review of International Affairs,

Thus, Abootalebi continues

Institutionalization is essential for political stability, for systematic, orderly channeling of contesting elites' demands for political leadership. To be democratic, political parties, whether religious or not, must function within an independent institutionalized organizational network where final decisions are made and executed without constant interference from various layers of their country's state bureaucracies.[241]

This is exemplified in the case of Indonesian whereby the government's institutions and cronies directly or indirectly interfered with civil societies, political parties, the independent press organization and TV networks during the Old Order, New Order and also during Wahid's era.

Indonesian's example, and in particular, the influence of NU and *Muhammadiyah* make clear that democracy depends not just on the state but also on cultures and organizations in society as a whole. As Hefner pointed out

not all organizations in society are civil as demonstrated by the vigilantes and hate groups, and the state must act as a guardian of public civility. Independent courts and watchdog is needed if some citizen or official tries to replace democratic procedurals with nether-world violence. The key to democracy is not singular but multiple and builds on strategic interventions at many points in the democratic circle: civil associations, a free press and judiciary, the egalitarian diffusion of wealth and opportunity, and public support for citizens and leaders committed to these goals. There is no one size fits all democracy. For examples gender and family roles, community and individuality, public and private, and rights and duties change over time. Freedom, equality, and pluralism are generalized values. Muslim democrats may prefer a stronger commitment to public moral education than Western liberals.[242]

In fact, the Muslim community in Indonesia will see a gradual "*santrification*" of Indonesian society that is the process of nominal Muslims becoming more devout.

By the same token, as highlighted by Lt. General Agus, "civilian and military leaders have discussed the need for greater military professionalism. Reassigning the military from a "guardian of the nation" role to an "instrument of national defense" role

Journal, Volume 3, No. 1, March 1999.

[241] Ibid.

[242] Ibid. Robert W. Hefner,pp. 214-221.

within a parliamentary context that represents the most fundamental challenge to reforming governance and delineating state structures."[243] Obviously the transferring of the responsibility of internal security to the recently separated national police and various functional institutions requires time to prepare these institutions, and thus to truly get away from the image of human rights abuses and the shadow of the military of the past.

Modernity has witnessed powerful religious revivals, which is not a reaction against but a creative response to the modern world. Hefner had three responses: state conquest, separatist isolation or accept the diversity of public voices and acknowledge the nature of modern things.[244] Hefner further indicates, "that the democratization process depends not just on formal elections and constitutions but also on a delicate interaction between society and the state. Democracy requires a civic organization characterized by voluntarism, independent associations, and a balance of powers between state and society as well as among civil organizations themselves."[245] The real key to democracy's cross-cultural appeal is not imitation or westernization but dialogue and contextualization.

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[243] Ibid. Lt. General Agus Widjojo, Pacific Symposium, February 20-21, 2002.

[244] Ibid. Robert W. Hefner, pp. 219-220.

[245] Ibid. p. 215.

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V.   CONCLUSION

Islam is a religion of peace and moderation. However, after the September 11 attacks, with global media attention given to the religion of Islam and the attackers that happened to be Muslims, the Western perception of Islam appears to be militant and radical. This perception is registered despite other terrorist groups that have been in existence for so long in various parts of this world. Sadly, as the PM of Malaysia Dr. Mahathir said, "it is not because of the teachings of Islam but the interpretations made by those apparently learned in Islam to suit their patrons or their own vested interest."[246] Unfortunately, it is this radical few that receives full media attention to project the misunderstanding of Islam, the religion of peace and tolerance.

With globalization and democratization as the rule of the game today, both Sunni and Shi'i scholars have in recent years provided a framework and developed distinctive political theories that are self-described and conceived as being democratic using the absolute sovereignty and oneness of God as expressed in the concept of *tawhid* and the role of human beings as defined in the concept of *khilafah*. They involve special definitions and recognition of popular sovereignty, and an important emphasis on the equality of human beings and the obligations of the people to be the bearers of the trust of the government. Esposito and Voll emphasize, "Although these perspectives may not fit into the limits of a Western based definitions of democracy, they represent important perspectives in the contemporary global context of democratization".[247]

Muslims are always the lovers of justice. As Dr. Abdolkarim Soroush said

Adl (justice) is the floor, as it were, as ethics and *ihsan* (generosity) is the ceiling. Thus, ethics lies between the two limits of justice and generosity. If Muslims cannot attain *ihsan*, then they must at least strive to implement '*adl* in society.[248]

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[246] PM Dr. Mahathir Mohamad, "Deviant Muslims' Threat of Overthrowing Moderate Malaysia," Speech delivered at the World Economic Forum (WEF), Waldorf Astoria, New York, January, 31 to February 4, 2002.

[247] Ibid. Esposito and Voll, p. 27.

[248] Dr. Abdolkarim Soroush, "Reason and Freedom in Islamic Thought," Second Annual CSID Conference, a Keynote Address, Published by the CSID, Washington DC, Volume 4, No. 1, January, 2002

Muslims need to familiarize themselves with the theories of justice, but Muslims must not forget that justice varies from time and place. They must figure out how justice is to be attained in modern times under the conditions of modern life. In the past, the focus of political theory was exclusively on the existence of a just ruler. A just society was assumed to result inexorably from the presence and leadership of a just ruler, and nothing more needed to be done beyond giving leadership to this person. However, times have changed. Emphasis must now be shifted from the lone leader to institutions, laws, and processes. Therefore, basing upon the general direction as evidence in the Qur'an, the institutions, laws and processes can then be interpreted into a political system of Islam using Mawdudi's, *Tawheed* (Oneness of God), *Risalat* (Prophet hood) and *Khilafat* (Caliphate) or Sheikh Taha's Islamic values of, *Tawheed* (Oneness of God), *Tazkiy'ah* (purification of the human being), and *Imr'an* (building a civilization with values). Thus, Islam is compatible with democracy depending upon how it is interpreted to fit into the various molds of the democratic principles.

Islam hierarchical setup differs from the other monotheistic religions of Judaism and Christianity because it has no system for priests. Muslim discards this system of priests simply because historically Muslims believed that the Hebrew and Christian priests had changed the original contents of their religions and do not want the same to happen to Islam. However, over the centuries those learned in Islam, the *ulama*, gained such authority over the Muslim laity that many of them tended to use their considerable influence to gain power for themselves. They became like the priests of other religions. Critically commented by Dr. Mahathir

> The early *ulamas* were knowledgeable in many disciplines besides Islamic theology. Today's political *ulamas* are only knowledgeable about those parts of the teachings of Islam, which seemingly support their political views. Many misinterpret and distort Islam in order to legitimize their political creed. The favorite is that only *ulamas* may rule a country, democracy notwithstanding.[249]

The globalization process brings with it Islamic resurgence. The newly educated Muslims, with borderless worlds, computerization, and an abundance of knowledge, unlimited access to everyone from everywhere, have awakened to new thoughts. Early

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[249] Ibid. PM Dr. Mahathir's speech at WEF, January 31 to February 4, 2002.

Muslims were great scholars excelling in mathematics and the sciences but some political *ulamas* rejected knowledge that was not specifically religious for fear that such people might challenge their authority. This is particularly so as evidenced by the Islamic organizations mushrooming in the world. In Malaysia, the Sisters-in-Islam (SIS), International for Just World (JUST) and *Nahdlatul Ulama* and *Muhammadiyah* in Indonesia are a few such modernist civil societies of new Islamic resurgence organizations.

In Malaysia, Islamic parties are allowed to function within the framework of the political system and they now form the main opposition to the present government. With the intent of making Malaysia an Islamic state, the Pan Malaysian Islamic Party (PAS), won two states in the last election in 1999. However, basing the party's objective only on the Muslims votes will cause the vision to just remain a vision unfulfilled. A moderate and controversial PM Dr. Mahathir with his "autho-democratic rule" and his Barisan National (BN) will be in power for a few more years. His deputy, a moderate Muslim, hopefully will take over the premiership in due time. As for the opposition Barisan Alternatif (BA), it will remain just a credible opposition force, unless a compromise is reached on the various divergences of the parties' ideologies. By the same token, civil societies of Islamic aura will flourish in Malaysia and remain influential associations that will infringe into the exclusive domain of *ulama* in interpreting the Qur'an to new heights.

Meanwhile in Indonesia, the two most influential Muslim organizations, the traditionalist NU and modernist *Muhammadiyah*, have extensive influence and play an active role in the alliance and coalition with the other political forces. President Megawati inherited a nation in turmoil and with perseverance she will be able to stabilize the nation collectively with her able cabinet and the total support of the armed forces. With the "*santrification*" wave of devout Muslims that is sweeping Indonesia currently, the future President could be a moderate male Muslim from one of the large civil organizations or political parties. Megawati will just be a short-term president while Indonesia is recovering from unending ethno-religious and ethnic conflicts that will subside without the support of TNI, the main key player. However, ethnic and ethno-religious skirmishes

will still occur on a much more smaller scale just like anywhere else in this world that is plurally and culturally diverse as is Indonesia.

The problem facing the Muslim countries today is mainly due to deviations from Islamic fundamentals. As PM Mahathir stressed

> People are fond of equating fundamentalist with fanatical and extreme orthodoxy. Fundamentals of Islam are simple, basic and good. If Muslims stick to the fundamentals of Islam they would not be divided into a multitude of different sects, race and nations each claiming to be the true Muslims or more Muslims than the others. If Muslims return to the fundamentals of Islam, Muslim nations would be well administered by trained and skilful people and would be able to compete within the global community. Islam is not just a religion. It is a way of life. It should bring about peace, stability, and success. It is a way of life, which does not neglect spiritual values. It is a way of life, which can bring greatness to the followers of Islam, as it once did.[250]

An acceptable way to resolve political differences in Islam without resorting to violence and intimidation is through dialogue, debate and discussions. Only when Muslims start to contribute their share of modernization achievements, learn to live with differences of opinions, encourage diversity, and benefit from the opinions and experiences of others, will the communities of Muslims be movers of the world again.

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[250] Ibid. PM Dr. Mahathir's Speech at WEF, January 31 to February 4, 2002.

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